

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR,

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

VOL. IV.
IRELAND.
PART II.

REPORTS

BY

MR. W. P. O'BRIEN, C.B.
(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER),

UPON CERTAIN

SELECTED DISTRICTS

IN

COUNTIES

CARLOW, CORK, CLARE, KERRY, KILDARE, KILKENNY,
KING'S, LIMERICK, QUEEN'S, TIPPERARY, WATERFORD,
WEXFORD, AND WICKLOW,

WITH

SUMMARY REPORT
PREFIXED.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.
February 1893.



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ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR,

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

I R E L A N D.

A.—SUMMARY REPORT

BY

MR. W. P. O'BRIEN, C.B.
(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER).

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THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

To GEORGEY DRAGE, Esq., Secretary,
Royal Commission on Labour.

Monkstown, Co. Dublin,
26th June, 1892.

THE
AGRICUL-
TURAL
LABOURER.

SIR,
1. HAVING now brought to a close the several local inquiries I had been instructed to institute into the general condition of the agricultural labourers in certain selected districts of the country, it seems desirable that I should take the occasion to supplement the detailed reports already furnished by me—for the information of the Royal Commissioners—upon each of the Unions visited, with a brief summarised review of the different results arrived at in the course of my proceedings.

2. The inquiries intrusted to me were commenced at Kenmare, County Kerry, on the 19th July last, and were concluded on the 3rd instant in the Union of Carlow, the following additional Unions having been surveyed by me in the interval, viz., Kanturk, in the East Riding of Cork, Naas, in the Counties of Kildare and Wicklow, Ennistymon, in the County Clare, Cashel, in the South Riding of Tipperary, Wexford, in County Wexford, Lismore, in County Waterford, Thomasstown, in County Kilkenny, Kilmallock, in the Counties of Limerick and Cork, and Mountmelick, in the Queen's and King's Counties.

3. These particular Unions were selected by the Royal Commissioners as affording, it was considered, a fairly typical representation of the general condition of things prevailing in the several counties in which they are respectively situated, and it may be assumed, I think, that the choice so made has, upon the whole, fulfilled the object in view with sufficient fullness and accuracy for all practical purposes.

The 11 Unions named embrace portions of 13 different counties, of which seven belong to the Province of Leinster, and six to Munster.

Of the entire number eight are entirely inland, and the remaining three are partly inland and partly maritime districts, combining between them, probably, as good examples as are to be found of almost every diversity existing in either Province—in regard to the nature of the soil, the varied description of the systems of farming pursued, the character and habits of the population, the circumstances, employments, and ordinary industrial resources of the working classes, and, generally, of the many and diverse conditions under which they live and labour, at the present time, in the several districts to which they belong.

4. In the execution of my present task I propose, as the most convenient arrangement, to follow the same classification of subjects, and the same order of reference to them that I have observed in my several district reports.

I.—SUPPLY OF LABOUR.

5. As regards the sufficiency or otherwise of the supply of labour for present requirements, it has been seen, from the several reports already submitted by me, that there is almost everywhere a striking concurrence of testimony as to the fact that during the hurried seasons, spring, haytime, and harvest, but especially during the harvest period, when time is the paramount consideration, a more or less serious dearth of labour is now nearly universally experienced, and complained of by the farmers.

At such times there can be no doubt that in recent years the most injurious consequences would have been in numerous instances, and in many districts, entailed by this were it not for the mechanical aids now supplied by the use of agricultural machinery, to which resort is at the present time almost everywhere commonly had by most farmers of at all a large class.

In the case of the smaller farmers, to whom this resource is not open, the difficulty is generally met by the practice which now obtains amongst them of at such periods

Small
farmers.

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LABOURER.

mutually assisting each other—a practice, it may be observed, which is much facilitated in some districts by the fact that in different kinds of land the necessary work can be done at varying dates, between the middle of June and the middle of September in each year.

During the other and, of course, more prolonged seasons of the year, however, the picture becomes entirely reversed, and the complaint heard on all sides from the labourers is that, during these periods, little or no employment can be procured by them.

There is no single Union that I have visited in which this complaint was not urged, with more or less earnestness, but as might be anticipated, it was, of course, loudest and most frequent where tillage farming has been in a great measure either almost entirely abandoned, or very greatly reduced in extent, or where, in addition to this, there is a general absence of those special industries, other than agricultural, which in some districts are found to afford so valuable a resource to a large number of the labouring class during the most trying periods of the year.

6. That the supply of agricultural labourers has everywhere decreased during the past 10 or 15 years admits, I consider, of not the smallest doubt.

The explanation of this is obvious, namely, the heavy drain experienced during the period in question owing to the continuous emigration of large numbers of the young men and women belonging to this particular class of the community.

7. In the 11 Unions dealt with, I only met with one in which it can be said that there is now anything in the shape of an immigration of workers from other districts experienced during particular seasons.

The exception is the Union of Kilmallock, in the County of Limerick, one of the richest grazing tracts to be met with in any part of Ireland, and especially famous for the production of hutter of a superior quality.

In this Union the general population has reduced 30 per cent. during the two last decennial periods, and a significant proof of the particular class from which this drain has been mainly supplied is furnished by what will be found described in paragraph 21 of my report upon that district.

It has been there explained that during nine months of each year the large dairy farmers in that quarter are now almost entirely dependent for the conduct of their special business on large numbers of young men and women—natives of Kerry and West Cork—who regularly every year arrive in the Union for this purpose about the middle of March, and remain there until near the end of December, when they again return to their native places.

In the same Union, too, a limited immigration of ordinary farm labourers, for harvest work and potato digging, &c., takes place, in certain districts, during the months of September and October, the full particulars connected with which are detailed in paragraph 22 of my Kilmallock report.

Beyond this there is nothing in the shape of immigration to be noted at the present time, except that in some few districts the sons of small farmers and certain town labourers remove temporarily into other parts of the same Union, with a view to taking advantage, while it lasts, of the high rate of wages generally obtainable during the pressure of the harvest season.

8. As regards the comparative efficiency of labourers of the present and former times it has been, I may say, everywhere a subject of complaint that the former exhibit in this respect a marked decline—this, it is represented, being especially observable in regard to their absolute inability now to undertake tasks involving more or less special skill in their performance, as ploughing, mowing, reaping, threshing, and thatching, &c., which are often described as being now in the nature of “lost arts.”

This is probably, upon the whole, by no means an unjust estimate of the situation; but it must be added in fairness that, to a certain extent, this falling off is, no doubt, attributable to the extended use of machinery in the execution of work formerly provided for by manual labour, and the consequent loss to the labourers of the present day of the opportunities enjoyed by their predecessors of acquiring, by practice, the skill required for such operations.

The main cause of the difference, however, lies, in my mind, not so much in what has been just stated as in the fact that the emigration movement has had the effect of depriving the country of by far the best and most capable of the labouring classes.

Tillage
farming.

Industries.

Increase or
decrease.

Emigration.

Immigration

Kilmallock.

Dairy
servants.

Ordinary
labourers

Town
labourers
and servants/
sons.

Comparative
efficiency of
labourers,
past and
present

Effect of
machinery.

Emigration.

9. As regards the efficiency of the labourers in the particular districts now under review, as compared with those of other places, it is probable there is not much difference to be noted in this respect—the two special causes of the deterioration complained of just adverted to having been, in recent years, in pretty general and uniform operation throughout the country.

In one respect, and only in one, can the labourers of the present day be regarded as being in advance of those who preceded them; namely, in the knowledge some of them have acquired, from recent experience, and in almost every district, in the handling and application of machinery to certain agricultural operations.

The number of those who have acquired this skill is not, however, large upon the whole, and they constitute, at best, but an insignificant factor in the consideration of the general question.

Efficiency as compared with other districts. Present labourers' knowledge of the use of machinery

II. CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT.

10. The employment afforded to agricultural labourers at the present time partakes in every district of the twofold character of being both "regular and continuous" and also "casual and intermittent."

The facts as to this are naturally found to differ widely in the several districts; but there is scarcely any one point involved in the present inquiry in connexion with which it has been so difficult to arrive at a clear comprehension of the truth as that relating to the precise extent to which labourers are unable, without any fault on their own side, to find fairly constant employment in the "slack" seasons of the year.

Continuity of employment.

In certain Unions, as indicated in my reports relating to them, little doubt can be entertained that few really industrious and capable labourers need be now at any time idle, if willing to accept such reasonable wages as farmers can afford to pay under present circumstances; but this state of things cannot be said to be at all universal. There are, it is equally incontrovertible, many other districts to be met in which during these periods a considerable proportion of even the perfectly good, willing, and industrious workers experience a season, more or less prolonged, of enforced idleness, and of, consequently, severe trial and privation.

The question turns very much, of course, upon the character of the respective districts, the nature of the farming operations chiefly pursued in them, and on the presence or absence of such auxiliary industries as it is in the power of agricultural labourers to take advantage of, where they exist, during certain periods of the year.

The matter being one of considerable practical interest, I will, without unduly multiplying evidence relating to it, take leave to reproduce here a few brief extracts from the testimony furnished to me on the point in two Unions of an entirely opposite character, and which may, I think, be accepted as fairly representing the state of the facts as they exist in most of the other Unions of corresponding types.

On one side I select for this purpose KILMALLOCK UNION. It is an exceptionally rich and prosperous district, but there is little tillage farming encountered in any part of it, and the industries other than agricultural to be met with there are few and, for the most part, unimportant.

Kilmallock

No. 1. A most intelligent land agent there, who showed an exceptional mastery of all the details of the subject, says as to this:—

Evidence.

"From the 1st of November to the 1st of March the employment of the labourers is very casual. The farmers as a rule only hire them when absolutely necessary."

And again he adds:—

"May and June are also somewhat slack for the labourers."

No. 2. A local magistrate, himself long and largely engaged in agriculture, and who is much regarded and looked up to by all classes in his neighbourhood, says, on the same subject:—

"But the want of constant work keeps him (the labourer) still from hand to mouth, and generally he has to wear out a hard winter on this account."

And he adds:—

"It is the want of constant work, in my opinion, that has driven so many of our young people of both sexes from us, and still continues doing so."

One further extract will suffice as to this:—

No. 3. A witness who is extensively engaged both in trade and agriculture, and who was specially commended to me as the best authority on the subject in his locality, says:—

"The general condition of the agricultural labourer is far from being satisfactory; the employers' own condition being so uncertain that he cannot afford to insure certainty to those he casually employs."

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TURAL
LABOURER.

Carlow
Union.

On the other side of the question, and as contrasted with this, I select the UNION OF CARLOW. In this Union it is estimated that tillage farming still obtains to the extent of about, on an average of the different districts, one-fourth of the entire area, and there are besides to be noted there several local industries of considerable importance.

In one of the districts visited by me in the south of the Union, the district poor law guardian there, an active, useful, and most intelligent local representative, says:—

Evidence

No. 1. "I farm 89 Irish acres (144 statute). I have also business and county-road contracts. I employ, on an average, 25 men throughout the year.

"There is not in the County Carlow an industrious man who cannot get constant work.

"I consider the general condition of the labourers here as fairly satisfactory; and WHEN MEN ARE IDLE IT IS THEIR OWN FAULT."

A very extensive landed proprietor, in the same quarter, says on the subject:—

No. 2. "The supply of labour in this district is very much less than the demand. Farmers are calling out that they can get no labourers. I know of several cottages on farmers' lands unoccupied, and which they would gladly let at a nominal rent, if they could get labourers to occupy them and work for them. The farmer with sons and daughters grown up is the man who is making farming pay nowadays."

And he adds further on the subject:—

"The farmers have only themselves to blame for the dearth of labour. When there were plenty of labourers they treated them badly; got the most they could out of them; worked them when they wanted them, in the spring and summer, and turned them away in winter.

"If they had employed their labourers at a fair wage all the year round, and treated them fairly there would be no dearth of labour now."

I will only add to this a brief extract from the evidence of a medical officer of long experience in the east of the Union, who says as to this:—

No. 3. "I should say the demand for labour is greater than the supply. NO INDUSTRIOUS STEADY LABOURER, NEED BE A DAY IDLE."

What has been just stated is intended to apply chiefly to the case of labourers of even the best and most capable type; but in almost every district is met a class different from these—men whom farmers will not engage on account of their inferior and defective working qualifications, save when under the stress of absolute necessity—and it is certain that amongst such labourers, wherever they exist, and whatever the character of the district, employment is, as a rule, rarely more than casual and intermittent during a considerable part of each year.

In addition to these, there is a further class to be noted, consisting of certain town labourers who will not undertake regular work at reasonable wages, preferring to this a life of partial idleness, combined with occasional jobs at a higher rate. Their employment too, is, of course, everywhere casual and intermittent, but in their case this is a matter rather of deliberate choice than of actual necessity.

Terms of
engagement

11. The conditions of engagement are, in most places, now usually by the week or day, except in the case of resident farm servants, who are hired by the quarter, half-year, or year; but though the ordinary contract term perhaps rarely exceeds a week, a large proportion of the labourers so engaged are, in fact, retained permanently in the same employment, or at least during good behaviour.

Hours of
labour—
Meal time.

12. The hours of work are usually from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., in summer, and from daylight to dusk in winter, with an allowance of from 1½ to 2 hours for meals. In winter breakfast is usually taken before beginning work, and then the allowance is only 1 hour for the dinner meal.

Time going
to and from
work
Sunday
work

The time occupied in going to and from work varies considerably, and is not taken into account in this estimate.

13. Sunday work is everywhere very limited, and is strictly confined to those whose duties render it indispensable, as men having charge of horses and cattle, &c.

III.—WAGES AND EARNINGS.

14. The current rate of wages varies a great deal, not only in different Unions, but sometimes in different districts of the same Union, the scale being usually somewhat higher in and immediately about the larger towns than in the adjoining rural districts.

The usual rates, where diet is not supplied by the employers may be said, speaking generally, to range from 8s. to 12s. a week, but 9s. and 10s. constitute by far the most common scale observed in the case of the ordinary rural labourers.

In the case of herds, specially skilled labourers, such as ploughmen, and those whose employment is more or less of a confidential nature, as well as in the case of town labourers, the higher scale of 12s. is allowed.

Where the labourer is dieted by the employer, which is, to a great extent, the usual practice amongst the smaller class of farmers, the scale is from 4s. to 7s. a week with either two or three daily meals, but 5s. and 6s. with two meals appears to be the arrangement most commonly followed.

In certain districts, as Wexford, 4s. to 4s. 6d. is usually given with three good meals, even a fourth meal, of a light description, being also, in some cases, added.

In the busy seasons of spring, haytime, and harvest the wages demanded and conceded by employers considerably exceed the scale just quoted.

In harvest especially the wages now commonly range from 2s. 6d. to 3s. 6d. and 4s. a day, food being very frequently given also in addition to this.

In fact, at such times, casual labourers can, as a rule, now command what terms they choose to dictate, and even permanent labourers receive from their employers at such times a more or less substantial addition to their ordinary wages.

15. The labourers do not, as a rule, often add to their wages by piecework, a form of employment which does not find much acceptance with them at the present time, and which, when undertaken at all, is usually confined to the making of drains, the cutting, saving, and tramping of hay, the cutting of turf, and stone-breaking on the public roads, &c., at which employments wages which may be estimated at from about 2s. to 3s. 6d. a day are sometimes earned by agricultural labourers during certain parts of the year.

16. Wages are now most commonly paid weekly, but in haytime and harvest casual labourers are often paid, as engaged, by the day.

17. The additions to wages in the shape of perquisites and allowances are exceptional, and are for the most part only given to labourers in the permanent employment of resident gentry, and farmers of the large class.

They are, however, very frequently of a substantial character in many of these cases, and may be said to take chiefly the shape of a free house and garden, or free potato ground, tilled and manured by the owner; sometimes, as in the case of herds, grazing is allowed for one or two cows, or milk is given, either free or at a reduced price; an allowance of fuel, or free turbarry is also sometimes given.

It is likewise the practice on some estates to give the permanent labourers presents at Christmas, and to assist them from time to time in various other ways, as circumstances may suggest, such as in cases of sickness or serious accident, &c.

18. In certain districts wages are earned during part of the year at employments other than agricultural, as in connexion with the malting industry, which is especially remunerative where it exists, the collection of sea-wood, quarrying, stone-breaking, and the cutting and saving of turf, &c., but in regard to these, precise details are supplied, and will be found on reference to my reports on the particular unions where they are respectively met with.

19. The estimated annual earnings of the different classes who are in constant employment throughout the year are easily arrived at, and may be said to be, speaking generally, about as follows, where no diet is supplied:—

Ordinary labourers	-	-	23l. 8s. to 26l.
Herds and other special cases	-	-	31l. 4s. with allowances.
Town labourers	-	-	31l. 4s. without "

Where diet is also given the general rate would be 13l. to 15l. 12s.

In cases where, though the employment is continuous, no wages are allowed to the labourers for broken weather, or on Church holidays, &c., the general estimate is that there are altogether about 265 working days in the year on which the labourer can reckon, and, calculated on this basis, the annual earnings of the ordinary labourers would be about 19l. 17s. 6d. to 22l. 1s. 8d., where no food is given, and about 11l. 0s. 10d. to 13l. 5s. in addition to two daily meals where diet is also allowed.

In these estimates no account, it may be observed, is taken of perquisites and other special additions to wages which may be realised in that way, the precise value of which it is difficult to determine.

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Herds and
special
labourers.
Dieted
labourers.

Wexford.

Harvest
wages.

Piecework.

Mode of
payment.

Perquisites
and allow-
ances.

Wages
earned at
other em-
ployments.

Estimated
annual
earnings.

Broken
weather and
holidays.

Where the employment is purely casual and intermittent, as it is in the case of a considerable number of the labourers, and in regard to nearly all the women and boys, the annual earnings are too variable and indefinite to be made the subject of any exact calculation.

Resident farm servants as a rule receive 10*l.* to 12*l.* a year, being found in every-thing and receiving in most cases a liberal diet.

As regards diet, the labourers generally may be said to be almost everywhere rather liberally provided for at the present time, and at a considerable cost to the employers, of which the latter not unfrequently complain very much.

A rather extensive practical farmer in the Cashel Union thus somewhat feelingly described to me his own experiences in this matter.

He says:—

No. 1. "Twelve or fourteen years ago the labourer would have potatoes and milk for breakfast, potatoes and butter for dinner, and often stirabout for supper. Now we farmers must give them bread, butter, and often eggs for breakfast, meat for dinner four or five days in the week, and the others butter, and very often tea for supper."

This, as a general description, may perhaps be slightly tinged by the not unnatural bias of a witness viewing the question from the standpoint of the employer, but that it does not at all events very much exaggerate the facts may be inferred from the evidence I received on the same subject from one of the secretaries of the local labour league at Taggart, in the county Wexford.

He says as to this:—

No. 2. "The breakfast given by farmers is generally stirabout and milk, or bread and milk, no tea here except in rare cases, dinner meat two or three times a week, American meat with potatoes, supper, tea and bread, or potatoes and milk. At four o'clock they also get tea with bread."

This, of course, it will be understood, only applies to the case of the labourers themselves, and of that particular section of the class who receive board from their employers in part payment of their wages.

The position of their wives and children at home in this respect is, it is certain, by no means equally favourable, and the same observation applies to those labourers who, instead of being dieted by the farmers, share as to this the common lot of the other members of their families.

Two short extracts from the evidence will suffice to illustrate the general state of the case as it affects these classes.

No. 1. The secretary of the now extinct Labour League at Wexford, who evinced an especially intimate acquaintance with the general affairs of his class, says on this head:—

"The food of the LABOURERS' FAMILIES is wretched, and consists of Indian meal, stirabout and butter-milk.

"Less than one-fourth of the labourers are paid entirely by money wages, 8*s.* to 3*s.* a week.

"I consider the labourers should have 2*s.* a day, that is 12*s.* a week, WITHOUT DIET; they cannot do on less."

No. 2. The case of the labourers who are not boarded is thus tersely described by one of themselves.

He says:—

"I calculate my own outlay thus:—I have 10*s.* a week. I spend for rent 1*s.*, tobacco 6*d.*, milk 1*s.*, coal 8*d.*, light 4*d.*, that is 3*s.* 6*d.*, leaving 6*s.* 6*d.* for the family of eight."

IV.—COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.

21. It will probably, I think, be accepted as a fairly well established proposition that in few if any of the countries with the affairs of which we are at all conversant has the condition of the class of agricultural labourers, in regard to their house accommodation, ever been known to sink to a lower level of general wretchedness than that very largely reached in Ireland in this respect, in even comparatively modern times.

On the other hand, and as some counterpoise to this, perhaps it may be now added with not less justice that nowhere has the same progress been recently made in the effort to grapple practically with and reduce the dimensions of the evil that has been experienced, in at least the two provinces with which alone it has been my duty to

Evidence.

Evidence.

Labourers' families.

Labourers who are not boarded.

Past condition of affairs.

Effect of recent remedial legislation.

deal, under the healthy impulse of the remedial legislation of the last ten years on the subject.

The facts connected with the existing state of affairs in this respect present, in the different districts, so great a variety that it would not be possible to make them the subject of any summarised statement here, and for a clear comprehension of them, and of all the surrounding circumstances it will be necessary to refer to the reports on each particular union separately, in which the fullest information will be found to be set forth in minute detail.

But in order to realise properly what the condition of things was which led to the application to fit of so drastic a remedy as that supplied by the several legislative measures of 1883-91 relating to labourers' dwellings, the records of a period somewhat antecedent to the date of these enactments will have to be consulted.

No readier or more reliable source of information could, probably, be suggested on this subject than the series of reports from the several Poor Law Inspectors, presented to both Houses of Parliament in the session of 1870, in immediate connexion with the then pending land legislation of that year.

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER.
—
Existing
condition.

Poor Law
Reports of
1870.

In these reports will be found precise and minute details as to the general condition, at that period, of the agricultural labourers in every Union in Ireland, including full particulars as to their house accommodation.

In connexion with this special attention may be here drawn to, as it then struck me, a most pregnant piece of evidence which will be found, pages 12-13, in the published series.

It is, it may be premised, the personal testimony of a medical officer, who was also a justice of the peace and chairman of his board of Town Commissioners—a witness, it may be observed, of great practical experience, and of unquestionable weight, as an authority on the subject treated of by him.

Though what is stated had immediate reference to the affairs of one locality only—AN IMPORTANT ULSTER DISTRICT—it conveys so forcible, and, at the same time, so accurate a representation of what was then, it cannot be doubted, a very common case in almost every part of the country that it may, I consider, be usefully reproduced on the present occasion in that connexion.

He said:—

"The house accommodation of the labourers is simply *wretched*."

Evidence

"Their houses are seldom fit to keep out rain, the floors are damp, the windows do not deserve the name, mere holes frequently stopped with rags, they have very rarely built chimney braces, and in nine cases out of 10 are filled with smoke every time a fire is put on."

"No matter how large the family there is never more than one sleeping place, off the kitchen, in which they are just huddled together."

"Nothing can be more miserable than the habitations of the agricultural labourers, for they cannot be called houses."

"Nothing calls more loudly for a remedy."

"The houses erected for factory operatives are good, though much overcrowded, but the agricultural labourers' huts are a disgrace to the christianity and civilisation of the country."

"If the farmers have claims for an improvement in their status the labourers have a hundred times stronger claims."

"It is only those whose daily avocations lead them to their homes and who see them in their beds (too often a little straw on the floor) that can form a true opinion of their misery and want."

"Pray excuse my prolix answer to the last question. I only wish I had one of our legislators for one day, just to show him the real state of the agricultural labourers."

Though the writer of this thoughtful and impressive exposition of the case as it stood in 1870 has not lived—it is to be regretted—to witness it, there is some satisfaction in the reflection that the legislative intervention for which he so earnestly pleaded at that time has been since, though somewhat tardily, extended to the subject of his striking and valuable testimony.

22. Though the progress already made in the exercise of the extensive powers conferred on the different local authorities by the several Labourers Acts of 1883-91 has been in many districts considerable—in one Union—that of Kilmallock—it has been seen that the expenditure actually incurred up to this has fallen only a very little below 60,000*l.*—still the operations that have been as yet undertaken in a large

Alleged
defects in
Labourers
Acts.

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proportion of the Unions can hardly be regarded, upon the whole, as being of much more than a merely initiatory and somewhat tentative character, admitting of, and in numerous instances even demanding, a wide expansion in the future.

Further, judging from what has come under my own personal observation, it may be added that the desire to acquire possession of these cottages on the part of the labourers is obviously growing daily in intensity and earnestness.

For these reasons it seems desirable that special reference should be made, on the present occasion, to the leading points that have been, in the course of my inquiry, pressed upon my attention as calling for amendment or alteration in connexion with the subject.

They have been urged, I may observe, by witnesses whose intelligence and experience give them a special claim to be personally heard in support of their contentions by those in whose hands lies the power of practically dealing with the numerous difficulties and complications that surround the satisfactory solution of this most intricate question. I accordingly, with this object, desire to give their views such prominence as may be derived from their receiving a place here.

23. Of the amendments suggested, the first to be referred to relates to the machinery for administering the Acts and to the objections urged to the selection of the board of guardians as the agency for this purpose.

As to this, it is stated by one witness as follows:—

"Roughly speaking, my idea is that a thorough and satisfactory provision of cottages could not have been effected through the guardians.

"My scheme is:—

"1. That the Local Government Board should be empowered to appoint an official, such as a sub-commissioner, an intelligent man, with a practical knowledge of country life, whose duty it should be to prepare a complete scheme for the Union.

"2. That the Local Government Inspector should hold an inquiry into the scheme, which should have been published for at least a month before.

"3. That the guardians should appear at the inquiry as opponents or supporters of the scheme, or portions of it, as they might think fit.

"4. That the Local Government Board should make such order as they may think just on reading the evidence and the inspector's report.

"5. That guardians, owners, occupiers, or labourers should have the right to appeal against any provision of or omission from the order.

"6. That the appellate tribunal should be the Court of Appeal of the Irish Land Commission."

He adds to this the following observation:—

"The present system in practice forces the labourer to initiate the proceedings, and consequently the noisy and importunate labourer alone, it often happens, is provided with a cottage.

"Labourers in many cases say nothing lest they should irritate their employers."

He says further:—

"I would add the following suggestion to those I have already made, viz.:—

"7. That the cottages should be assigned to labourers respectively by the official who prepared the scheme, subject to the approval of the Local Government Board."

These suggestions involve, of course, a rather wide and radical reform of the existing system, but they come from a witness of altogether exceptional authority and experience in such matters, and one, too, who is well known for the warm and intelligent interest he has taken in the cause of the labouring classes.

24. In every Union that I have been engaged in, almost, I may say, without exception, complaints, more or less frequent, have been strongly urged on two points in particular.

(1.) The first of these is the great DEMY said to be involved in the prescribed forms of procedure, and generally entailed in practice before the labourers can enjoy the benefit of the respective schemes.

It is estimated that an interval of about two years usually elapses between the period of the first inception of the schemes and the date at which the sites agreed upon come into the actual possession of the Board of Guardians.

(2.) The second complaint relates to the greatly disproportionate EXPENSE said to be frequently entailed, under various heads, for incidental charges, from which no advantage of any sort accrues to the labourer. Of these, perhaps the outlay most complained of is that caused by having appeals heard before the Privy Council in

Suggested
amendments
in
labourers
Acts.

Evidence.
Objection to
board of
guardians,
and sub-
stitute
proposed.

Delays in
proceedings.

Incidental
expenses.

Dublin, instead of being determined locally, at a trifling cost, in the respective county courts.

On these several points, three of the CLERKS OF UNIONS, with whom I have been recently brought into contact, all, in their department, public officers of the first rank in point of general intelligence, and who have each had beside, much practical experience in carrying out the provisions of the Labourers Acts—in the administration of which they appear to have taken a special and almost personal interest—have communicated to me their respective views and suggestions, and I accordingly here submit them for the consideration they are so well entitled to receive.

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LABOURER.
—
Clerks of
unions.

Evidence

No. 1. In the first case referred to it is stated as follows :—

"I believe the Labourers Act could with a few simple amendments be made to work much quicker. I will point them out to you. The first movement is the Representation Forms. These should be properly filled, and when a sufficient number of them have been received, say for 100 houses, the guardians could commence. 1st step: Serve 14 clear days public and private notice to each guardian. In the meantime the clerk, if he is a smart man, can have the improvement scheme ready. This could be signed on the day of considering the Representation Forms. 2nd step: Advertise the scheme being ready for at least three weeks in one month. (This is ridiculous and absurd, and might very easily be done without.) 3rd step: After the advertisement give a month's notice to owners and occupiers that the land is about being taken. (A fortnight would be quite enough.) 4th step: At the end of the month petition the Local Government Board. (The Local Government Board should lose as little time as possible, very often a month could be saved here.)

"An inspector, who generally does not come down for two or three months, sometimes four months, should be down in three weeks. A practical man should be appointed who knows his business. They should visit the cottages and send up their report within three weeks of inquiry, and a Provisional Order should be made out within a certain period of time. Now our last inquiry was held in June 1892, and our Provisional Order was not made absolute until February.

"In fact no matter how hard we work here we cannot get on the land for nearly two years after consideration of the Representation Forms. (No advertisement of improvement scheme). Two weeks notice to owners and occupiers. Local Government Board to hold inquiry, prepare Provisional Order, and advertise it within five months. I consider this ample.

"When Provisional Order becomes absolute the guardians should be at liberty to enter the plot for building forthwith, the amount of absolute purchase or rent to be afterwards determined by Land Commission or arbitrator.

"In this way the Labourers Act could be worked well and with quite sufficient safeguards to the public in at least seven months, and a labourer might expect to get into his cottage within 12 months from the initiation. This would be as quickly as could reasonably be expected, taking building and all into consideration."

No. 2. In the second case the following observations are offered :—

"The guardians have made altogether five schemes, including nearly 500 cottages, and so far as there have been delays I have found them to occur between the periods of the guardians' petition to Local Government Board for their sanction to schemes and the issue of the Provisional Orders, six or seven months; and again, between the guardians' application to Board of Works for appointment of arbitrator and the furnishing of the latter's final award, seven or eight months more; and I presume these delays are caused by want of a sufficient staff in each department who could give their undivided attention to the working of these Acts.

"Of course there might be some time saved by shortening the periods in the Acts for notices, advertisements, &c.; thus three weeks are required (14 clear days' notice to guardians are necessary) between receipt of 'Representations' and their consideration.

"A week's notice to guardians ought to be sufficient.

"The scheme when made must be published during three consecutive weeks in 'one and same month.'

"'One and same month' might be omitted and save time.

"The service of notices on owners, &c., might proceed concurrently with publication of scheme instead of waiting until the following month.

"As already mentioned, I have found the subsequent delays in departments of Local Government Board and Board of Works. The latter appear particularly slow to move.

"As to expenses the 'general expenses' which include cost of printing, advertising, serving notices, local inquiry, Provisional order, and arbitrators' expenses, have not averaged more than 3*l.* per cottage built, and I do not think this excessive.

"There ought, however, to be some cheap mode of transferring the sites to the guardians without the necessity of going into titles, which in some cases have cost us as much as 10 guineas for a site, in addition to 3*l.* paid to guardians' solicitor.

"In another instance the solicitor to King's Hospital was paid 15*l.* 14*s.* for four sites purchased on the hospital property for title; and in an instance where owners failed to prove title, and purchase money was lodged in court, the costs of subsequently drawing the money out of court were taxed at 12*l.* against the guardians.

"I would suggest that power would be given to the Court of Quarter Sessions to fix the value of the sites when the guardians are lodging with the Clerk of the Peace the maps of proposed sites and schedules of the estimated value of each interest, they might at the same time serve notice on him of their intention to make application at the next Quarter Sessions, not being earlier than a month after receipt of notice to have the values as set out in deposited schedules made an order of the court unless appealed against, in which instance the court might employ the services of the court valuer if considered necessary, and determine the value, this decision to be final.

"The guardians might then be permitted to pay over to the respective persons named in schedule or amended schedule as certified by the court the purchase money thus awarded each, and the receipt of such persons should be a good title for the guardians. Of course the parties named in schedule would have notice of the awards and of the application to Clerk of Peace, and the schedules might be published.

"Some such course would, I think, save expense and delay."

No. 3. In the third and last case referred to it is stated:—

"The representation form, signed by twelve ratepayers or labourers, need not be essential. Practically the form is worthless, the signatures being made on what is then a blank sheet.

"The Local Government Board, on a representation from a dispensary doctor that houses are unfit for habitation, ought to be empowered to move the owners of the houses, and, failing the owners, the guardians, to replace such dwellings by new houses.

"The requiring of maps, particulars and estimates need not be insisted on. The number of cottages to be built suffices to indicate the probable cost. I would suggest when settling in motion, anyhow, the Local Government Board would call on the board of guardians to say if any and how many new cottages are required. That the Local Government Board say by order, issued after notice, and some inquiry if desired, that they authorise the building of that number if landlord and tenant agree to give a site. I would have no further formality as regards such site, only build at once.

"I would make it compulsory on a farmer to give up for sites a certain proportion of his farm, say one acre to every 60 or 80 in the holding. The advantage to farmers of a supply of labour at their doors justifies such a measure under present temptations to emigrate. The rent may be automatically determined, the proportionate part of his own rent, or of the valuation.

"All the advertising now required is needless. All the Land Clauses Acts requirements and attendant expenses should be got rid of.

"The Privy Council should be avoided. The Local Government Board Confirmation by Order ought to be sufficient, with right of appeal say to the county court in cases where Local Government Board refuse confirmation.

"Sanitary officers' certificates now required need not be insisted on. Any one can tell as well as a doctor whether a house is fit for habitation.

"A single form of conveyance of the plot may be prepared by the Local Government board, saving in most cases 2*l.* to the solicitor for each conveyance.

"The clerk of the union, or rent collector, ought to be empowered to appear at petty sessions to recover possession from defaulting tenants. (They can appear in *sanitary* cases under section 257 of Public Health Act.) Now a solicitor must be engaged.

"If the labourer desires to acquire the house and plot and pays the needful instalment, he may be empowered to do so."

25. One further point remains to be adverted to in regard to what may be termed MATTERS OF COMPLAINT.

In the execution of the powers conferred on them under the Labourers Acts the local authorities have hitherto, so far as I have seen, confined their operations exclusively to the erection of entirely new buildings.

No resort has been had so far anywhere, that I know of, to the provision contained in section 16 of 48 & 49 Vict. cap. 77, relating to the purchase and repair of existing houses.

This is, in reality, a matter calling not for legislative interference, but for merely a change of administrative practice on the part of the local authorities themselves, but as it is one of considerable practical importance to the labourers generally, I consider it desirable, in connexion with it, to reproduce here the very decided views expressed on the subject by the Chairman of the Nans Board of Guardians, himself an experienced practical agriculturalist, who says with respect to it:—

"There is only one point which I wish to emphasize, and that is that if the agricultural labourers are to be put on an equality they should all have the same advantages conferred on them as those fortunate few who have succeeded in getting cottages under the Labourers Act, without this there must be a strong feeling of jealousy, and for such there are very good grounds."

And he, in another reference to it, says:—

"AND HERE IT WOULD NOT BE OUT OF PLACE, IN GIVING PARTICULARS SUCH AS IS SOUGHT FOR, IF I MIGHT VENTURE A SUGGESTION AS TO HOW TO IMPROVE THE CONDITION OF THE LABOURING CLASS WITHOUT UNDULY CLASHING WITH THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS; IT WOULD BE TO PURCHASE UP EVERY LABOURER'S HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY FROM THE OWNERS WHETHER THE OWNER BE A FARMER OR A LANDLORD, AND THEN RELET THOSE HOUSES, AT LEAST SUCH OF THEM AS ARE FIT FOR HABITATION, TO THE LABOURERS, ADDING IN EACH CASE THE STATUTORY HALF ACRE OF LAND, AS THE BOARDS OF GUARDIANS ARE DOING THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY."

"My object would be to place every labouring man in the same position of independence, so that he could sell his labour to the best employer, and not be hampered by being obliged to work for any one individual. I have some experience of this subject, and I do not hesitate to say that ultimately it will or must be done, as the class of labourers who are now living under the boards of guardians are far and away better off than those who are living as cottiers under farmers, FOR WHILE THE ONE IS COMPARATIVELY INDEPENDENT THE OTHER IS NOT SO, AND HE MUST WORK FOR THE OWNER OF HIS COTTAGE, OR BE SUBJECT TO BE DISMISSED IF HE LEAVES THE EMPLOYMENT."

As already explained, full provision for giving effect to what is thus so strongly urged is contained in section 16 of 48 & 49 Vict. cap. 77; but as it is quite possible, I think, that the existence of this enactment may not be everywhere fully understood, I submit it here as a matter of general and useful information.

The section runs as follows:—

"A sanitary authority acting in execution of the Labourers (Ireland) Act, 1883, may purchase and put into repair any existing cottage which is in a bad state of repair, or may purchase by agreement any existing cottage, or by agreement may purchase and allot to the occupant of any such existing cottage half an acre of land, and may make additions to and improvements in any cottage purchased by them; and may let any cottage purchased by them to an agricultural labourer under the conditions prescribed by the said Act. A sanitary authority having any existing cottage, or purchasing any existing cottage, may purchase any land for the purpose of letting it to the tenant of such cottage, being an agricultural labourer, or may *without buying or purchasing any cottage* purchase or take on lease for a term of years, by agreement, tracts of land to be parcelled out in allotments to be let to any agricultural labourers living in any neighbouring village or town, if such land is so situated as to be suitable for that purpose. Provided that the land to be let to any one such person shall not exceed half an acre. Provided also, that except in a case of a tract of land, in the neighbourhood of a town or village as aforesaid, a sanitary authority shall not let or permit to be held any land acquired by them under the said Act, as amended by this Act to or by any person who is not also tenant to the sanitary authority of a dwelling-house."

26. I shall add only one more quotation from the evidence under this head, namely one from that of a highly intelligent resident proprietor in the Queen's County who takes a warm interest in the case of the labourers around him, and who describes his own personal experience as to the practical effect produced upon them by the provision

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Purchase
and repair
of existing
houses.

Section 16,
48 & 49 Vict.
c. 77.

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TURAL
LABOURERS.

Effect of
improved
accommo-
dation on
labourers
Evidence.

of improved house accommodation in terms which are not only very interesting in themselves, but which, moreover, appear to me to supply local authorities generally with a strong incentive and encouragement to actively continue the good work they have been engaged in with respect to this.

For this reason chiefly I desire to reproduce here the valuable and rather striking testimony to which I refer.

He says:—

"The guardians of Mountmellick Union have built several labourers' houses in the district.

"It is one of the great faults in the plan of these cottages that they cost a great deal too much money for the accommodation in them.

"AT THE SAME TIME IT IS A MOST REMARKABLE FACT THAT THE WHOLE CONDITION OF THE OCCUPANTS SEEMS TO CHANGE WHEN THEY MOVE FROM THE OLD MISERABLE HOVELS INTO THESE COMPARATIVELY COMFORTABLE HOUSES.

"THEY DRESS MUCH BETTER, KEEP THEIR HOUSES FAR MORE NEATLY, AND I HAVE MANY COME TO ME TO ASK FOR FLOWER SEEDS TO PLANT IN THEIR GARDENS, AND IN FLOWER BOXES IN THEIR WINDOWS."

27. In concluding such observations of a general character, as this important subject of the house accommodation of the labouring classes has suggested to me to offer on the present occasion, I may be permitted to supplement what has been said by inviting in this connexion special attention to the coloured map of Ireland which will be found, in the Appendix B, Kenmare report.

It indicates at one view, and in a convenient form, the precise extent to which the provisions of the Labourers Acts had been up to March, 1892, carried into practical effect by the various local authorities in every part of the country.

It will be seen from it that a striking diversity is exhibited in the extent of the operations as pursued in the various provinces—the statistics of the Leinster and Munster Unions presenting a marked contrast to those of Ulster and Connaught in this respect.

In the former it will be seen that, save in a few isolated and exceptional cases, the provisions of the Acts have been everywhere applied with more or less activity, and in some of them on a scale of considerable magnitude, while in the latter the very reverse of this has been experienced.

In only comparatively few of the Ulster and Connaught Unions has, it will be observed, any effect been given to these Acts.

In none of them has what has been accomplished exceeded what must be pronounced to be an extremely moderate standard, while in the great majority of the cases these remedial measures—as they were undoubtedly designed by the Legislature to be—have apparently remained up to this as completely inoperative as if they had never been enacted.

As my inquiries, however, did not, in any single instance, extend into either of these latter provinces, I am, of course, unable to form any opinion as to what the local circumstances may be which have led to the rather startling divergence in practice that this authoritative official record of the Local Government Board discloses.

The question is, however, one of much general interest at the present juncture, and may, I think, be expected to receive before long the attention the great practical importance of the subject is so well calculated to attract.

V.—GARDEN ALLOTMENTS.

28. To each of the cottages provided by the Board of Guardians under the Labourers Acts there is everywhere attached what was until recently the maximum quantity of land permitted by statute, namely, half an acre.

By the Act of 1892, 55 Vict. c. 7, this has been now extended to a full acre, but though it is proposed, in some of the new schemes since adopted, to give the labourers the benefit of this extension, time has not yet admitted of its becoming in any case an accomplished fact.

In the case of houses held either under estate owners, or on the hands of the farmers or elsewhere, a great diversity in regard to the facts as to this is observable.

In many cases gardens of varying size are attached to the houses, but they are, as a rule, of limited extent, sometimes, perhaps, only a few perches, and rarely much, if at all, exceeding a quarter of an acre, while in many instances labourers have no gardens of any sort.

Map of
Ireland,
Appendix A.
Extent to
which
Labourers
Acts have
been applied.
Diversity of
results.

Leinster and
Munster.

Ulster and
Connaught.

Cases of
divergence
unknown.

Cottage
gardens.

55 Vict. c. 7.

Extent of
gardens.

29. There is not, generally speaking, much variety to be noted in the system of cultivation adopted.

Potatoes constitute the staple crop, but cabbages are also grown, and occasionally it is found necessary, for purposes of rotation, to substitute a crop of oats, or some other cereal. Little beyond this, it is to be deplored, ever attempted in this particular, with respect to which I may be allowed to reproduce here a quotation from the evidence supplied to me recently in the Mountmellick Union by a close observer of the general situation, who says as to this:—

“It is greatly to be regretted that the labourers have no idea of the cultivation or use of other vegetables, so as to make soup and pies of vegetables and potatoes, which would thus greatly improve their diet.”

Cultivation.
Potatoes and
cabbages.

Suggested
improvements.

30. As has been explained in the several reports on the subject which it has been my duty to submit, little or no practical effect has been hitherto anywhere given to the important provisions contained in Section 16 of 48 & 49 Vict., c. 77, and Section 12 of 49 & 50 Vict., c. 59, enabling local authorities in Ireland to provide rural allotments of land for labourers resident in adjacent towns and villages.

Allotments
in rural
districts for
town
labourers.

In only one instance that came under my notice, Kilmallock, had anything been actually done in this way, and there it was only on a very limited scale.

Kilmallock.

In another case also, Carlow, it has been recently decided to put the Act into force, but there, too, the project as designed is very limited in its scope.

Carlow.

With these two trifling exceptions the provisions referred to have, so far as I am aware, remained hitherto absolutely inoperative.

There are, however, symptoms observable in some of the districts recently visited by me that public opinion in these places is beginning to wake up on the subject, and there is, I think, some reasonable ground for hoping that a feeling favourable to their future adoption is likely to extend, and will probably assume before long a more practical shape than it appears to have up to the present time anywhere taken.

In my recent reports on Mountmellick Union, paragraph 27, and Carlow Union, paragraph 25, I have, it will be seen, entered in some detail into the merits of this whole question.

Mount-
mellick Union.

To these reports, in order to avoid the unnecessary repetition of statement on the same subject, I may here be permitted to make reference, for such further and fuller information as may be desired with regard to it.

It may, however, be allowed to me, perhaps, to add generally that my recent visits to several towns and villages, in different parts of the country, have had the effect of creating in my mind a strong and decided impression that the judicious extension of these enactments at the present time would confer on a large section of the labourers domiciled in them a much needed boon, to which they are now looking forward with a feeling of genuine earnestness and anxiety that cannot, I think, be mistaken in its significance.

31. As regards the system, once universal in Ireland, of labourers renting annually from neighbouring farmers the use of a limited piece of ground to grow a crop of potatoes in, it has been seen from my several reports that at the present time the prevailing practice as to this varies considerably in different districts of the country.

Cow-acre
potato plots.

Different
systems.

In some of them little or no difficulty is experienced in procuring this accommodation if the labourers are in a position to supply the manure, or are willing to pay in addition to this a rent at the rate of about from 4*l.* to 5*l.* the acre.

Manure.

In other cases, however, where the natural richness of the soil renders the farmers comparatively indifferent to getting their land thus manured, or where the general arrangements make them reluctant to break it up for this purpose, they either refuse altogether to give it, or demand so large a rent—12*l.* the acre—as places it out of the power of most of the ordinary labourers to avail themselves of the accommodation at all.

Rent.

There are, however, many cases to be met with in which employers give this accommodation to their permanent labourers not only free, but manuring and ploughing the ground for them, and only requiring them to plant the seed.

Employer's
permanent
labourers.

The town labourers, as might be anticipated, are, as a rule, the class who suffer chiefly from the want of this valuable aid to their other limited resources.

Town
labourers.

32. It has been explained in previous reports that, as the terms are understood in England, there is nothing to be met with in this country in the shape of cow runs, cow gates, or cow pastures, in the possession of labourers of any class.

Cow runs,
cow gates,
and cow
pastures.

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LABOURER.
—
Grading for
cows.

The only thing bearing any resemblance to this ever seen here is that in some, but not on the whole in very many instances, either resident gentry or large farmers give the accommodation of grazing for one or more cows as a privilege to particular labourers in their permanent employment. Herds especially very often enjoy such allowances, but in the case of other labourers, though not unknown, the privilege is, it may be assumed, a somewhat rare one in most places.

Live stock.
Pigs and
poultry.
Town
labourers.
Tenants of
guardians' cottages.
Goats.

33. The live stock to be found in the possession of labourers are ordinarily limited to pigs, poultry, and, in certain districts, goats, with occasionally an ass or two.

Few town labourers can command the necessary facilities for prosecuting these industries, but in the rural districts, and especially in the case of those labourers who have been fortunate enough to secure one of the guardians' cottages with the appurtenant plot, a substantial profit is now very commonly derived from these sources.

Goats are in certain districts, especially where no mischief to plantations, &c. is to be apprehended from them, very numerous.

They are not kept for purposes of any direct profit, but are greatly prized, and are of considerable value as affording a means of supplying milk for the use of the younger children.

Beeindustry.

34. The bee industry, inquiry as to the existence or otherwise of which was one of the points embraced in our original instructions, can hardly be regarded as being now anywhere in the nature of an Irish institution, amongst the labouring classes.

At any rate I encountered no single instance in which it was pursued on any scale—great or small—in the course of my several local inquiries.

VI.—BENEFIT SOCIETIES.

Ballin
Temple
clothing
club.

35. With the solitary exception of the Ballin Temple clothing club, details concerning which are given in my Carlow Union report, paragraph 26, I have not in the course of my inquiries been able to trace the existence of any benefit society, or other analogous organisation of which the agricultural labourers are in the habit of availing themselves, and I am satisfied that nowhere were any such to be found.

They would be, it cannot be doubted, of incalculable advantage in many ways to the labourers and their families in time of need, but it is to be feared that few of the class at the present day are to be found who possess the forethought or self denial necessary to enable them of themselves to either originate or permanently sustain, on even the most moderate scale, an organisation of this provident description.

VII.—TRADE UNIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

Kanturk.

36. Some years ago the Agricultural labourers showed a tendency to establish organisations for the protection and advocacy of their own special interests, and in one Union in particular—Kanturk—where the movement assumed for a while considerable dimensions, it has been seen from my report on that Union, paragraph 20, that very substantial concessions were wrung by the labourers from the farmers in that quarter in the year 1850, entirely through the agency of their local labour league.

Since that time, however, it may be said that nearly all such bodies have been gradually on the wane in this country.

In the Unions visited by me recently, where they had a previous more or less active existence, I found them to be at the present time either entirely extinct or possessing, in their altered condition, little vitality or real force.

This result was probably attributable in the first instance to the fact that about the year 1879 these local organisations became gradually overshadowed by the far more important one of the then established Land League.

In more recent times, however, they were further materially weakened, I think, by the operations so largely undertaken under the Labourers Acts, which had the effect of redressing, in great measure, the principal grievance the movement had been directed against, by providing a considerable number of the labourers with improved house accommodation.

In rather striking confirmation of the view just indicated, that the liberal administration of the Dwellings Acts has proved a potent factor in the practical discouragement of local labour agitation, it may be of some interest to mention here that the cases met with by me in which the subsidence of such movements had been most remarkable were those of Kanturk and Wexford Unions, in both of which these measures had been applied in a considerate and even generous spirit.

Causes of
decline
Land
League.
Labourers
Acts.

Kanturk and
Wexford
Unions.

On the other hand, the only places in which I found them to still retain anything like real vitality were certain districts of the Queen's County—notably Mountstath—in which there had been, so far, a conspicuous failure on the part of the local authority to satisfy the certainly not unreasonable aspirations of the labourers in this regard.

Wherever I found any such organisation to be still in existence, on however contracted a basis, I afforded the members the fullest facilities for ventilating their views and I have in every such instance given all due prominence in my reports to the evidence submitted to me on their behalf, either by themselves or their selected representatives, whom, I must say, I found to be, generally speaking, quite reasonable and moderate, both in the views urged and the expectations entertained by them.

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER.
—
Mountstath
Still existing
labour
legues.

VIII.—GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED.

37. The general relations existing between employers and employed at the present time have been described in my reports as I found them to exist in each separate district that I visited.

Upon the whole, I think, they may be described as being fairly satisfactory, but the facts as to this are not uniform.

As a rule, and as might be expected, the feeling is best and most friendly where employment is fairly constant, and the labourers have consequently least to complain of on this head. It is, on the other hand, found to be least favourable where this element is absent, and large numbers of the labourers are without employment during a more or less protracted period of the year.

IX.—THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

38. The question next arising for consideration, under the particular head now reached, namely the general condition of the agricultural labourer at the present time, is one by no means free from difficulty, and presents many and varied aspects, not only as it is affected by the widely divergent circumstances that are encountered in different districts of the country, but scarcely less so in regard to the many particular conditions that are found to influence the lives of different sections of the labouring class in even the same locality.

As a general proposition it may be stated, I think, with some confidence that almost everywhere, and in regard to the condition of all sections of the class, without distinction, a marked and substantial IMPROVEMENT has taken place WITHIN THE LAST TEN OR FIFTEEN YEARS.

This result may be ascribed to the combined operation during that period of several entirely distinct causes.

Of these the three principal may be stated to be (1) the increased demand for labour occasioned by emigration (2) the sensible decline that has been experienced during the time in the general cost of living, and (3) the benefits conferred upon a considerable number of the labourers by the remedial legislation of recent years, in regard to their house accommodation and surroundings.

The precise extent to which these several causes have operated to improve the general condition of the class varies considerably in degree in different localities, and for a clear comprehension of the full facts of the situation as to this, it will therefore be necessary to refer to the reports dealing with each Union separately.

Of the central fact, however, that a marked improvement has been experienced, generally in recent as compared with previous years, admits in my mind of no doubt whatever.

As regards this—the COMPARATIVE aspect of the case—little or no difficulty is presented, the facts relating to it being, I consider, perfectly clear and unambiguous, but things are found to be somewhat different in this respect when the second and more important branch of the question, namely that of the present ACTUAL condition of the labourers, is approached.

Here a wide disparity is almost universally encountered, and in this respect the existing state of affairs can only be accurately described as being one of a VERY MIXED CHARACTER.

In those districts where the continued pursuit on a more or less substantial scale of tillage farming is combined with other industries, all fairly capable and industrious labourers can, generally speaking, reckon on reasonably constant employment throughout the year, and where, in addition to this, they are in possession of either the plots of ground attached to the cottages provided under the Labourers Acts, or are able in

Increased
demand for
labour.
Cost of
living.
House
accom-
modation.

Tillage
districts.
Industries.
Cottages.

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURERS.

Con-acre
ground.

Resources,
con-acre
cottage
gardens.
Industries
of wives.

Good
labourers.

Inferior
workmen.

Town
labourers.

Age and
size of
families.

Evidence.

the absence of this to secure the accommodation of a piece of con-acre potato ground from some neighbouring farmer, their general condition may be pronounced to be a fairly comfortable one, and on the whole QUITE EQUAL TO THAT OF THE SMALL FARMERS.

In certain districts, however, tillage has been, as already explained in the course of this report, reduced to a minimum, while there is, at the same, an almost entire absence of important industries other than those connected with agriculture. In such cases it is incontrovertible, I conceive, that a large proportion of even the best and most industrious labourers have to endure a more or less considerable period of enforced idleness during certain seasons of the year.

At such times the only resources left are (1) the produce of the con-acre potato ground, (2) the cottage plots, or (3) the assistance contributed by their wives—especially from the rearing of poultry and pigs, &c.—and which is often very considerable.

Where these resources fail it is obvious that a period of severe privation must be the inevitable lot of the labourers, many of whom, it has been represented to me, are compelled at such times in certain districts to depend, in a great measure, for their support on the assistance procured by their wives by begging amongst the surrounding farmers.

What has been just stated applies to even the very best of the labouring classes; but there is another and rather numerous class to be considered whose case is still more unfavourable, namely, that of those who, owing to age, infirmity, or some other cause, are regarded as being only indifferent workmen. To this class farmers, unless when compelled by necessity, are not found willing to pay wages, and rather than employ them they admittedly and advisedly abstain from doing to their land many things that it is more or less urgently in need of.

This is a case very commonly encountered, and in, it may be said, almost every district, and from this class loud complaints are, as might be expected, everywhere heard as to the want of regular employment, and its natural consequences.

These complaints are most frequent in regard to the labourers resident in the towns and villages—a large proportion of whom come under the category just described—but they are likewise heard, too, though not so often in the rural districts.

39. The labouring population concentrated in the principal towns includes, however, one special element never met with in rural districts, namely, that of "loafers" and idlers of lazy and irregular habits of life, who will accept no regular employment, and who depend for subsistence on casual jobs, eked out by such assistance as their wives are in various ways able to contribute to it.

For this particular class, where they exist, nothing can, I think, be either said or done, and they can only be left, as they themselves elect—to follow their own peculiar devices.

40. In addition to the several considerations that have been just touched on, as those which chiefly govern and influence the lot and general condition of the agricultural labourers at the present time, one other remains to be noted, namely the age and number of the children dependent on them.

The vast difference observed in the circumstances of individual labourers in the same district is connected in a great degree with their position in this respect—the general condition of those who have large and helpless families of young children to provide for contrasting, of course, very unfavourably with those who have grown up sons and daughters to assist them by their daily earnings and in other ways.

41. As bearing directly on some of the special points just adverted to and in connexion with the general question, I may be permitted to reproduce here two brief quotations from the evidence obtained by me in one of the principal districts I had occasion to visit, promising only that they come from two resident proprietors, both well known for the practical and intelligent interest they have long taken in the question of the labourers' condition.

No. 1. The first, referring to the class of town labourers, says:—

"Generally I should say that the condition of the agricultural labourer in this neighbourhood depends entirely on himself. If he is a good labourer, steady and sober, he is valued and can command constant employment at 2s. a day. The labourers living in towns are lazy and extortionate. I constantly see them hanging about the corners when wages are 3s. 6d. and 4s. a day. Then in winter they starve and relief works have to be started to help them."

No. 2. The second refers to the effect of early marriages and large families as causes of depression as follows:—

"The general condition of the agricultural labourer is a deplorable one.

"The large majority of the better educated young men wisely emigrate, the remainder by early marriage and large families are from the commencement of their careers precluded from all possibility of raising themselves in the world.

"The old-fashioned pride which compelled the children to keep their parents off the rates is nearly extinct, as can be seen by the out-door relief lists.

"Nothing short of a State-aided compulsory old age Insurance Act would help them.

"I think the extension of the Labourers Act would be the best line to pursue to benefit the ordinary labourer, but there should be more superintendence exercised by the Local Government Board in the selection of tenants, and the rents paid by them.

"I think the labourers in towns are worse housed than those in the country; many of their dwellings are entirely unfit for human habitation, badly constructed, overcrowded, and without privies."

43. In addition to what has been just stated the general condition of the agricultural labourers, it may be observed, is of course further affected, and in many ways influenced by the number and nature of the ~~industries~~ other than those immediately connected with land cultivation which are to be met with in the different districts of the country.

Industries
other than
those con-
nected with
land.

In some they are only few and not very valuable, while in others they assume occasionally dimensions of considerable local importance.

They are too many and varied, however, to be conveniently enumerated and described in this place, but the fullest details that were accessible to me in regard to each will be found fully set forth in my reports on the several districts in which they were respectively encountered.

X.—CONCLUSION.

43. I have now brought this report to a close, and with it concludes my duty under the Royal Commission on Labour—the last public or official function, it may be, in which I am likely to be called upon to take a part.

The inquiry just completed has, from many old and early associations, been for me one full of interest, and it will be a very sincere satisfaction to me if I am enabled to feel that, in what I have written as to the results, I have succeeded in contributing something, however little, to the knowledge previously possessed as to the general condition and circumstances under which the agricultural labourers live and work in this country at the present time.

If I have failed to do so the fault, I am conscious, lies entirely with myself, for I most willingly testify that wherever my duties have called me I have experienced on all sides the utmost readiness and anxiety to afford me the fullest possible information.

I have, in my reports on the several Unions dealt with by me, endeavoured as best I could to thank those in each particular locality who had assisted me in any way, and it only now remains that in bringing my labours to a final termination I should in this collective form express to them—one and all—my deep and very sincere sense of obligation for the many valuable services for which I have been indebted to them.

I have, &c.,
(Signed) W. P. O'BRIEN,
(Assistant Commissioner).

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

I R E L A N D.

R E P O R T

BY

MR. W. P. O'BRIEN, C.B.

(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER),

UPON THE

POOR LAW UNION OF KENMARE

(CO. KERRY).

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APPENDIX A. 2.

Typical cases of labourers' houses in town of Kenmare.

APPENDIX B.

Map of Ireland showing the working of the Labourers (Ireland) Acts to 31st March 1892.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

To GEORGE DRAGG, Esq., Secretary,
Royal Commission on Labour.

Egmont Arms, Kesh, Co. Wick.
8th August, 1890.

Sir,
I, Having, as instructed, personally conferred upon the subject in Dublin, on the 30th June and 1st July, with Mr. W. C. Little, Senior Assistant Commissioner on Labour, I have the honour to report that in pursuance of Mr. Little's desire that I should, in the first instance, and pending further arrangements, proceed to inquire into the condition of the agricultural labourers in the unions of Kenmare (Co. Kerry), and Kesh (Co. Wick), I arrived at Kenmare on the 19th ultimo, and at once entered there on the duty assigned to me.

2. Kesh being very considerably the more important of the two unions named—especially in its relation to the labour problem—would, under ordinary circumstances, have attracted my first attention, but local considerations connected with the date of the Co. Wick Assizes, still in progress, rendered it necessary that I should reverse what would otherwise have been the natural order of my proceedings in this particular respect.

3. Since the date of my arrival at Kenmare I have visited all the principal districts into which the union is divided, and beside personally inspecting several of the labourers' houses, I have in each confined, or corresponded with, or taken in writing the evidence of the best representatives of the several classes and interests involved in my inquiry, that were accessible to me.

I have in this way seen the Protestant Rector of Kenmare, the most important parish in the union, as well as the Venerable Archbishop O'Sullivan, P.P., V.G., Kenmare, and the respective parish priests of the three chief outlying districts of Killarney, Tuosist, and Sneem.

4. I have had the assistance of the most valuable and intelligent co-operation on the part of the district inspector and the sergeants of the Royal Irish Constabulary in each district visited, and have further been in communication, for the most part personally, with inspectors of the Local Government Board, inspectors under the Congested Districts Board, the engineers of the Light Railway now in course of construction in the union, and others, as landlords, registrars, poor law guardians, poor law officials, medical officers of dispensaries, tax collectors, land stewards, farmers (large and small) and labourers, &c.

5. I likewise, at the request of the chairman, Mr. Thomas Trench, local agent to the principal proprietor of the union, the Marquis of Lansdowne, attended the meeting of the Kenmare Board of Guardians on Friday, the 22nd ultimo, for the purpose of explaining to the members the scope and purpose of the inquiry I was engaged upon, and inviting their co-operation and help in promoting it, my observations on that occasion receiving general publicity, through a report of the proceedings which subsequently appeared in the "Cork Examiner."

I may observe, in this connection, that the circumstances of this union are not such, as in my opinion, to admit of the adoption of the course indicated in the memorandum of instructions, either as regards the formation of local committees or the convening of public meetings, and I have accordingly in the exercise of the discretion with which I understand myself to be invested in each instance, abstained from resorting to either of these arrangements.

I may add, however, that I have experienced upon all sides, and amongst all classes, the utmost readiness to afford me the information I sought for, and further, that the statements supplied to me from the most opposite sources, correspond with each other in all substantial respects in a very striking manner.

6. Before proceeding to deal categorically with the several heads enumerated in the notes for inquiry, it seems to me to be absolutely necessary that I should submit some preliminary observations explanatory of the somewhat exceptional aspect of things presented in the Union of Kenmare, and the general conditions under which the

agricultural operations of the district are, at the present time, pursued, in respect of which it may, I think, be assumed that my observations can be accepted as being, upon the whole, fairly typical of the circumstances of the adjoining unions of the same class, so Coleross, Castletown, and probably Bantry and Skibbereen.

7. The Union of Kenmare, situated in the south-western extremity of the island, comprises, as divided for Poor Law purposes, 16 separate electoral divisions, and is in part island, and in part maritime, the land being divided from the southern extremity of the union up to the town for a distance, I should judge, of about 55 miles by a series of the sea, known as the estuary of the Kenmare River.

8. The natural contour, in its most parts of Kerry, chiefly of red sandstone, but there is also, what is not common to other parts of Kerry, a vein of limestone, running in a north-easterly direction towards and beyond Killarney, much the best and most favourably circumstanced district of the union, to a distance, as I should estimate it, of about 10 to 12 miles in length, and probably two to three in width.

I have heard that slates to a limited extent is also encountered in a district south-east of Kenmare, but this has not come under my own observation.

9. The territorial extent of the union is considerable, embracing as it does an area of, in all, 198,112 acres, largely made up, however, of barren mountains, moor, wood, bog, waste, &c., as may be judged from the fact that the Poor Law valuation of this wide expanse of country is only 15,701, or about an average value of 2s. per acre, with a population now reduced to 16,113 as against 18,790, the return for 1881, this being equivalent to a reduction, within the last 10 years of 2,485, or 13 1/2 per cent. of the previous population.

10. The face presented by the country is that of successive ranges of lofty mountains, frequently indented by valleys or gorges, some of which are reported to be of much value for grazing purposes.

With these there is also a large extent of level country, but generally speaking, more especially in the southern half of the union, of a poor and inferior quality.

11. The occupiers of the low-lying land usually have, in connection with their farms, the right of grazing in common a certain number of head of cattle and sheep on the adjacent mountain fens and slopes, whence presumably comes the usage that appears to obtain here of denoting the extent of a tenant's holding, not in the usual way by the number of acres it contains, but by the number of "cow's grass" he happens to be entitled to.

12. Certain parts of the district are said to be rich in minerals—notably copper ore—that it is a significant fact that there is no mining of any sort now in operation, nor has there been, I believe, for a good many years past.

The explanation given to me as to this is that the last attempt made to work a copper mine in the union proved a heavy financial failure, not owing to a deficiency in the extent or quality of the ore, but to the great expense incurred in extracting it, owing to the large proportion of rock with which it was mixed.

13. While in point of scenery the surroundings of this district may be pronounced to be strikingly attractive, and such as, I make no doubt, excite the acquiescent admiration of the numerous parties of tourists daily passing through it, between Killarney and Glenties, there is, I fear, no room to doubt that the Kenmare Union, at the present time, enjoys the unenviable distinction of being, if not the poorest, certainly one of the most impoverished of the several unions situated in this otherwise very prosperous quarter of Ireland—the explanation of which is I think not far to seek.

14. The great disproportion existing between the area and valuation of the union has been already adverted to, but a more cogent test of the condition of things is the proportion borne by the valuation to the population, viz.,

D

B.-L. KILGARR.	15,570, to 16,319 persons, being equivalent to rather less than 12-4s. for each individual.	The extent of tillage farming now adopted by them is variously estimated at from one-tenth to one-twentieth of their holdings, but personal observations convince me that as a rule it certainly does not exceed the latter figure, and is often very much less.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Definition of "congested district."	15. Under the Congested Districts Act of 1891, 54 & 55 Vict. cap. 48, a congested district is—section 36—thus defined—"Where at the commencement of this Act more than twenty per cent. of the population of a county, or, in the case of the county Cork, of either riding thereof, live in electoral divisions of which the total arable value, when divided by the number of the population, gives a sum of less than one pound ten shillings for each individual, these divisions shall for the purposes of this Act be separated from the county in which they are geographically situate, and form a separate county (in this Act referred to as a congested district county), &c."	24. The only crops may be said to be potatoes and oats, chiefly the former, grown in the quantities necessary to meet the farmers' own needs rather than for sale in the market. Green crops, as mangolds, turnips, &c. are unknown, save in a few cases of farmers of the better class.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Number of congested districts as defined in the Act.	16. From this it will be seen that the Union of Kenmare, even considered as a whole, considerably more than satisfies the condition prescribed to constitute a "congested district," but as, in point of fact, only 11 of the 16 electoral divisions comprising the union have been scheduled as congested by the Congested Districts Board—the remaining five not coming within the prescribed limit—it follows that the condition of the former, constituting rather more than two-thirds of the entire union, must be regarded as having attained a very extreme stage of congestion.	25. The next element, as bearing on the present position in this union of the scarcity of land, on which, of course, the agricultural labourers must ever be mainly dependent for employment, is that connected with their local obligations as public ratepayers, and in this respect, too, their present outlook appears to me to be far from encouraging.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Condition of the district.	This state of things would, under any circumstances, be serious, but it will be found, on further investigation, that other causes too are at work to add to the pressure, all combining to show that the farming classes generally of the union have reached a very low-water mark indeed.	26. The county cess or rate, which in Ireland as a rule falls exclusively on the occupier, happens to be at the present time exceptionally heavy in amount throughout the county of Kerry.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Number of rural holdings.	17. From a return made to me by the clerk of the union it appears the total number of rated holdings in the union is 3,060—thus giving an average valuation of only about 6l. 3s. for each rating.	This is, no doubt, in part owing to the configuration of the country, and the great extent of moorland which involves the maintenance of; but it is stated that the amount has been considerably relieved of late by the operation of certain special causes, such as the payment of railway guarantees, the maintenance of an extra police force, compensation for infectious diseases, &c.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Valuation of the district.	In some instances, of course, the same persons may happen to be rated for two or more holdings, but this is, I apprehend, rather exceptional.	Be the causes however what they may, the fact is indisputable that the amount assessed under this head during the past 12 months in the baronies of Glencough and Donkerrow South, which include within their area the entire of Kenmare Union, constitutes what must be allowed to be a very real impediment in an impoverished district such as this.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Rural holdings.	18. The corresponding valuation of each occupier does not exceed, I am informed from the same source, 5s. or 6s., while in a very large proportion of the cases the figure is stated to be very much under this.	The figures as to this for the past year were:— (1.) Glencough, &c. 11d. (2.) Donkerrow South, &c. 5d.*	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Rural holdings.	19. The resident landlords and gentry who, it is stated, formerly afforded a good deal of local employment in various branches, have from different causes seriously diminished in late years, while nothing like a class of large farmers can be said to have an existence in any part of the union.	To this, still dealing with the public liabilities of the farmers, are to be added:— (1.) The ordinary poor-rate, and (2.) The rate to repay the seed supply advances made by the Government to the union in the year 1891, under the provisions of the Act of December, 1890.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Rural holdings.	This fact is most strikingly illustrated by the statistics of the clerk of the union, in connection with his duties under the Juries Acts.	27. The ordinary poor-rate for the coming year has not yet been made, but that for the past year averaged somewhere near 2s. 6d. in the pound on the several electoral divisions, and in three towns, I find, ranged from 2s. to 3s. 3d.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Rural holdings.	20. The qualification for a special juror in this part of Ireland is a valuation of 70s., and this is only possessed at the present time by four persons in the entire union.	These rates, high as they were, have I learned proved insufficient, and the amount by which the estimate fell short of the actual requirements of the union will, therefore, have to be added to the rate shortly to be made.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Rural holdings.	The qualification for a common juror is 35s., which is only possessed by 44 persons, the whole union, with its 5,060 separate ratings, thus only contributing 48 to the roll of ordinary jurors, whether special or common.	28. The liabilities of individual farmers, however, under the Seed Supply Act, far exceed advanced to them on loan by the board of guardians are still more serious.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Rural holdings.	21. A most intelligent local magistrate who, besides being extensively engaged in trade, is also the owner of an estate purchased by him some few years since in the southern part of the union, informed me that of 160 tenants on his property, the average rent paid by them, which was formerly about 5s., did not now exceed 7s., and information derived from several other sources also is altogether confirmatory of the existence of this as being about the normal state of affairs throughout the union.	Under the terms of the Act this amount has to be repaid by the particular parties who received the seed in two equal annual instalments, one of which has just become due, while the other will have to be repaid not later than the 1st August 1893.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Rural holdings.	While the general character of the agricultural holdings in, as has just been described, I myself that I have found a universal consensus of opinion as to the fact that almost every one of the farmers is, at the present moment, involved in liabilities to the local shopkeepers and traders, and in many instances very heavily so, considered with reference to their means.	29. When these several very weighty liabilities are taken into account, and, in conjunction with them, are considered the large debts anted to be almost universally due to the local traders, as well as the rent payable for their holdings to their respective landlords, it would I think be obvious that in order to make both ends meet the class of small farmers constituting the predominant element in this union have before them a task of considerable practical difficulty.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Rural holdings.	22. The leading cause assigned for this is the great fall that has been experienced, in recent times, in the price of cattle, and partially also in that of hares.	The problem is one which it is not easy for a stranger to the ways and habits of the population to discover any reasonable or even possible solution of.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Rural holdings.	The reduction in the former case is usually estimated as from 30 to 40 per cent., but I am credibly informed that it has not infrequently reached as high as 50 per cent.—an contraction of which it may be mentioned that in one district visited by me, I was assured by the constabulary sergeant that a young milch cow could be thus purchased there for 3s. 10s., which, to his own personal knowledge, would a few years back have sold readily for 7s.	It is at any rate abundantly clear from what has been just stated how very unpromising a field is offered by such a state of affairs for the profitable employment of the class of agricultural labourers, with whose position, and prospects my concern chiefly lies.	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.
Rural holdings.	The extreme paucity of this change to the small farmers can be easily estimated when it is borne in mind that it is upon their cattle, sheep, and butter they are mainly dependent for the means of subsistence.	30. The statistics of pauperism in the Kenmare Union, comparing the present time with the corresponding periods of the two preceding years, may, as further bearing con-	The Agriculture of the Kingdom—Principles of Tillage.

* Assessed upon the Government Insurance Valuation.

what on this question, be of some interest, and are therefore added here, viz. :—

	1892.	1891.	1890
Number in workhouse	88	84	84
Number on out-door relief	270	308	387
Total	358	392	471

Though the total number in receipt of relief, as given above, shows some diminution this year, it will be observed that there is, on the contrary, a slight increase in the number of workhouse inmates, and as out-door relief is accompanied by any practical test, the number in receipt of it, it may be observed, is to be regarded rather as the measure of the liberality of the board of guardians than of the extent of destitution prevailing at any given date.

31. The following is the general average weekly cost per head of maintaining a pauper in the workhouse at the present time, viz. :—

	s.	d.
(1.) Food and necessaries	-	2 4½
(2.) Clothing	-	0 4½
Total	-	2 9

With these preliminary observations, which I trust I have not unduly elaborated, I shall now proceed to deal successively with the several heads of inquiry enumerated in the notes furnished for the assistance of the Assistant Commissioners, namely premising that in so doing I am to be understood as following the definition of an agricultural labourer given in section 4, 43 & 50 Vict. cap. 29, viz. :—

32. "The expression 'agricultural labourer' in the said Act and in this Act shall mean a man or woman who does agricultural work for hire at any season of the year, on the land of some other person or persons, and shall include handloom weavers and fishermen doing agricultural work as aforesaid, and shall also include boatmen."

I.—THE SUPPLY OF LABOUR.

33. The supply of labour is described as being everywhere sufficient for all purposes at the present time.

Except in the towns of Kenmare (population, 1,180) and Kilgarvan (population, 2,121) with their immediate vicinity, including the small villages of Cross Roads, the class of agricultural labourers, properly so called, may be now said to be everywhere considerably limited in number, and in the southern side of the union to have become almost extinct.

34. During the last 10 or 15 years large numbers of the class have left the country, the cause being the great diminution that has taken place in the extent of tillage farming, and the consequent loss of a market for their labour, the ordinary farm work being now almost everywhere performed by the farmers themselves, assisted only by their own immediate families.

In the districts lying to the south of Kenmare—viz. Sreena and Tinnahilly—this may be said to be almost entirely the state of affairs now prevailing,—and even so early as the village of Sreena itself with its population of 376,—the farmers in these localities being too poor and their holdings too small to admit of their employing labour of any sort—the small farmers being only just able to support such casual employment for themselves and their sons as the few larger farmers in their neighbourhood may be in a position to offer them during the spring, hay and harvest seasons.

In and about Kenmare itself and the district to the north of it, of which the village of Kilgarvan may be considered the centre, a more favourable state of things exists.

In Kenmare especially nearly all the shopkeepers are holders of farms in the immediate vicinity of the town, and in this and other ways it happens that a certain amount of employment of a mixed kind is, even in ordinary times, generally available for the labourers resident there. But during the last 19 months an entirely new and exceptional demand has, greatly to their benefit, been created both in this and the adjoining district of Kilgarvan, by the construction of a new line of light railway running from Kenmare by Kilgarvan on to Bradford, a station on the Great Southern line between Killarney and Milford, for a distance of 21 miles, or which about two-thirds are included within the limits of Kenmare Union.

35. On this latter (the Kenmare Union) portion of the line I learn there is a return obligingly supplied to me by the engineer, that there are at present employed 40 skilled and 29 unskilled labourers; and of these are reported to be the sons of small farmers residing within reach of the

work, but many of these belong also to the class of agricultural labourers and their sons, similarly resident, who often are said to be swimmers who have come into the arena attracted by this work, and who will no doubt leave it again on the completion of the line.

I have moved from the consularly mandated lists of the agricultural labourers personally known to them to be at present resident in and about Kenmare and Kilgarvan towns, evidence of the stranger's past referred to.

Of 65 of the class belonging to Kenmare, I find it stated that a large number have availed themselves of the railway work and are now engaged upon it, and at Kilgarvan I learn that of 51 known to be resident there 27 are now suitably employed.

This work, it may be observed, will cease at the furthest about time or ten months from the present time, when it is thought that a considerable amount of emigration may be expected to follow, where the workers have been provided enough to send themselves of the opportunity now afforded them of laying by the small capital necessary for the purpose.

36. No migration of agricultural labourers now takes place from this union. It has been stated to me, however, that many of the sons and daughters of the small farmers in the southern parts of the union are still constantly in the habit of leaving to take service in Wales and other places, but in the statements made to me as to this there appeared to be much vagueness and want of precise information as to the facts.

37. As regards the comparative efficiency of labourers now and formerly, answers from competent judges vary a good deal.

It is probably true that labourers are now, as a rule, less interested both in their work and in their employers than in former past; but in this respect I should imagine there is not much difference observable between Kenmare and most other places.

II.—THE CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT OF THE LABOURERS.

38. Except in the case of such resident farm servants as are hired by the year, the employment may be described as being, as a rule, *whenever times, casual and intermittent*; and where the hiring is not for a longer period than by the day or week, it is understood that wet days are not to be paid for; when, however, the hiring is for the quarter, half-year, or year, so it often is, this rule does not apply, and the labourers are paid for the full term. "wet or dry."

39. The greatest hours of labourers in summer from 6 a.m. (sometimes 7 a.m.) to 6 p.m., and in winter from daylight to dusk, with, generally speaking, in both seasons from three-quarters to an hour for breakfast, and the same for dinner.

In a country such as this, the time occupied in getting to and from work is much too indefinite to be stated with any approach to accuracy.

III.—WAGES AND BARRIERS.

40. Farm boys, who are really men, resident with and supported by their employers, get from 3d to 12s. a year.

Labourers employed without food receive 2s. to 10s., and in some cases 12s. a week; where food is given, as generally happens where the labourer has to cross a considerable distance to his work, 6d. is the usual rate. In harvest time, 5s. from 2s. 6d. to 3s. 6d. a day is paid, and on the railway 12s. per week in winter, and 14s. a week in summer are ordinarily secured. Boys about 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

Scarcely a lower rate than the foregoing is given, accompanied with certain allowances, thus one labourer, in the immediate vicinity of Kenmare, described his position to me—"I am in one employment all the year round, wages 8s. weekly 'wet and dry.' I also get an acre 'free for potatoes, which I plant with my employer's 'brass, grass and hay for a cow, and a kitchen and garden."

41. There are no opportunities in this union for adding to wages by piece-work, and, except as I have just quoted, there are no perquisites, allowances, or advantages obtainable by labourers, save in those rare instances where a labourer may succeed in inducing a neighbouring farmer to let him a quarter or half an acre of consecrated ground to plant his crop of potatoes in, and for which compensation he is usually charged at the rate of about 3d. 3d. 6d. to 4d. per acre.

42. The estimated annual earnings of an ordinary labourer, when constantly employed, would probably be about 25s. to 26s., rising in exceptional cases to 31s. Skilled labourers about 31s.

E-L.
KERRIDGE.
Cotton
Wool

On the railway an ordinary labourer would earn about 35s. and a ganger, or skilled labourer, from 20s. to 45s. The annual earnings of a labourer who failed to obtain fairly constant employment, it would be difficult to calculate with any approach to accuracy, and, though inconsistent just now, there must have been many such cases antecedent to the railway period, and many such still, no doubt, be again experienced when that important resource disappears.

IV.—COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.

Cottages
publicly
of various
and
expensive

43. It has been already explained that, except in such towns as Keshmarr and Kilgarvin, the Village of Cross Roads and the immediate vicinity of these places, there are now very few belonging to the class of agricultural labourers (non-coincident with their employers) to be found in the Union of Keshmarr.

Timbered
houses, &c.

In the towns referred to the labourers usually work in the immediate neighbourhood, and live either in a room or rooms in tenement houses, or in separate small houses of the same class, held by them as weekly tenants from the immediate owners at rents ranging from 1s. to 2s. 6d. a week according to accommodation.

Convenient
ten.

I have inspected several of these houses in Kilgarvin, Keshmarr, and Beemore, the walls are of stone and mortar, in a few instances of concrete, with slated and occasionally corrugated iron roofs. They appear to be, generally speaking, in a tolerable state of external repair, and when the fixtures occupying them are not, as they too frequently are, much in excess of the accommodation, they are probably quite equal to the houses in which the majority of the small farmers reside.

Ventilation.

In Kilgarvin, however, they appeared to me to be very inferior, and are besides in some cases grossly overcrowded.

Water
supply.

44. They are everywhere, as a rule, badly ventilated, and are without out-houses or sanitary accommodation of any sort.

Water
supply.

45. The water supply is reported to be good, except in the village of Beemore, where there is no pump, and much to the inconvenience of the inhabitants the water required for domestic use has to be drawn from the neighbouring river, which is, moreover, said to be—and I should think truly and to be—a source of supply seriously exposed to pollution.

Water
supply.

46. The rates and taxes on the houses are paid by the owner, and the tenure is usually weekly, the houses being held sometimes direct from the land lord and sometimes under a middle man.

Water
supply.

47. I have the honour to acknowledge, marked respectively A 1 and A 2, particulars of four labourers' houses inspected by me in the village of Kilgarvin on the 23rd ultimo, and also of some subsequently visited in the town of Keshmarr, and these may, I think, be regarded as being fairly typical of the general accommodation enjoyed in this union by the labouring class.

Water
supply.

It is, no doubt, difficult to understand how, for example, such a family (11 in number) as that of Denis Sullivan, of Kilgarvin, can exist in the limited space shown in the return to be at their command, yet persons in this position and their children appear, if most be allowed, to enjoy perfectly good health, owing no doubt to the length of time daily spent by them in the open air.

Water
supply.

Dr. Magberry, who has been for 21 years medical officer of the Keshmarr District, describes its sanitary condition as good, there being, he states, no epidemic disease of any kind prevalent.

Water
supply.

He also adds a very decided opinion to the following effect:—
"The labourers are best contented in the villages," and he further adds that, "if houses were built for them in the rural districts, labourers would still prefer the town, love of society, and possibly in some cases, greater proximity to the public-house being the probable attraction."

Water
supply.

48. Between the years 1883-91 there have been five statutory enclosures in Ireland dealing with the question of providing houses, and allotments of ground, &c., for the benefit of the labouring class, viz:—

Water
supply.

49. And from the annexed map marked H it will be seen that these provisions of the Legislature have been hitherto availed of by the local authorities, the Boards of Guardians, in certainly no spirit of liberality throughout the provinces of Leinster and Munster.

Water
supply.

To this rule, however, it will be observed that in Munster five exceptions are to be noticed, one being the small union of Ballyvaughan in the north-west of Clare,

and the three others, the union of Keshmarr, and the adjoining unions of Cahirciveen and Castletown in the southwest.

The first impression this state of things is calculated to suggest is, that these exceptions must be attributable, more or less, to indifference on the part of the local authorities to the condition of the labourers, but having closely investigated all the facts on the spot, I am in a position to say that this would be an altogether erroneous inference to draw, as far as Keshmarr Union is concerned, and in this respect it may probably be regarded as being fairly typical of the group.

I have heard but one opinion expressed in any of the quarters I referred to as to this, viz., that in the first place the financial condition of the union and of the farmers would not, under any circumstances, admit of their undertaking such an additional burden at the present time; and in the next, that even if the objection of the labourers themselves to exchange a town for a rural life could be surmounted, which is exceedingly doubtful, the money would literally be, as a rule, thrown away, if the Board of Guardians were willing to so invest it, there being now no possibility under the circumstances already fully detailed in this report of finding employment for this class in the rural districts of the union.

In this opinion I take leave to express my unqualified assent.

V.—GARDENS, ALLOTMENTS, &c.

50. As just explained, no effort has been given in this union to the legislative provisions as to providing allotments for labourers, and the houses rented by them in the towns and villages already described are, as a rule, entirely unaccompanied by any garden accommodation whatsoever.

As already stated, labourers in some instances are fortunate enough to obtain from a neighbouring farmer a small plot of a quarter or half an acre of potato ground, at a rent usually at the rate of from 10s. to 40s. per acre, the labourer providing the manure and labour, but such cases are not so numerous in this quarter of Ireland.

51. No bees are kept by the labourers in this union in any instance that I could hear of, but I have found in some of the houses a pig, a cow, a hen, and a dog, &c.

There is nothing beyond this, except that occasionally there may be a donkey kept, or perhaps a goat, to give milk to the family, or a sheep or two of a poor description, where, as it sometimes happens, grass is given by a neighbouring farmer.

VI.—BENEFIT SOCIETIES.

52. Benefit societies of any kind are totally unknown in this district.

VII.—TRADE UNION OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

53. The same observation applies under this head.

VIII.—GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYED.

54. Everywhere good so far as I could learn, and the constabulary report most favourably of the general disposition and demeanour of the working classes throughout the union.

IX.—THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

55. The information already submitted, both in my preliminary observations and under the several heads of inquiry just dealt with, will have explained how very limited a question that of the agricultural labourer—properly so called—has really become at the present time in most parts of this union, and how very little prospect there is of its proving to be at all more important in the future.

56. The ownership of property here may be said to be divided between the Marquis of Lansdowne, who is the owner of about one-third of the entire union, and several smaller proprietors.

In some few instances, where property has lately changed hands, the occupiers have purchased their holdings under the Land Commissioners.

57. Of other industries there may be said to be no almost entire absence here.

The fishing industry is very limited, such as it is, it is confined altogether to the southern part of the union, and to the farmers and their sons living near the shore, so that quite, about 40 or 50 persons may be partially engaged in this way during the season.

The
Marquis
of Lansdowne.

Allotment
Acts not
enforced.

Bees

Pigs, &c.

Unknown

None

Generally
good

Ownership
of property

Occupiers
purchased

Industries

Fishing

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER.

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AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER.

As to whether this industry is susceptible of further development in this district I cannot pronounce, any consulting local opinions having been expressed to me on the point.

Besides what has just been described, there is a small salmou fishery near Kinnaird, which gives during the season employment to about 12 men, who while so engaged are perhaps able to earn 12s. a week.

There was lately a small woolen mill in the neighbourhood of Kinnaird worked by water power, but it has been just closed, having proved, I understand, from some cause or other, unprofitable to the owners.

There is now a creamery established in Kinnaird, to which about 30 farmers within a radius of two or three miles of the town daily send their milk. About 274 gallons are sent daily in this way, and paid for at the rate of 4s. per gallon—the milk remaining after the separation of the cream is returned to the farmer, but the cream itself, after the churning of the cream into butter, belongs to the creamery.

The wages paid by this creamery amount, I learn, to only about 2L. 4s. per week, and it is stated that the business is not prospering or extending; the farmers, I am informed, finding that the distance they have to travel in, often too serious a loss of time.

In some of the neighbouring districts, especially in the parish of Tain, the farmers' wives manufacture a certain description of distich, chiefly for their own use, but also partly for sale in the town. It is said that the sales effected in this way would be probably represented by a sum of about 100L. yearly.

Kinnaird has been long celebrated for the beautiful lace made by the children educated at the local convent, under the control of the Sisters of Poor Clares—who also supply materials for the work to former pupils—who are paid for it, on its return, at the established rate.

I had an interview at the convent with the renowned mother—a most practical and intelligent lady—and who seems deeply interested in the promotion of this valuable local industry. From her I learned that the sales of the work realize for those engaged in it about 300L. a year. She added that the industry could have been largely extended before this but for the fact that the girls turned to it are constantly emigrating, and leaving their dependents on a very limited number capable of supporting work of so delicate a description. Of some 200 to 300 school girls now receiving their education at the convent about 30 are at present being instructed in this particular branch, these only being selected who have evinced both an aptitude for and a desire to learn it.

So far as I have been able to discover, these constitute the only special industries existing at the present time in the Union of Kinnaird.

52. The labourers and their families have as a rule three daily meals, but they have started to use that sometimes they cannot afford themselves more than two. The ingredients composing their dietary are few and simple: bread and tea for breakfast, for dinner the same, unless when potatoes are cheap, say 3d. the weight of 21 pounds and sometimes for a change, Indian meal substituted, with sour milk, or some salted fish, such as mackerel, herrings, or hake; or supper the same as breakfast.

53. Living in the "hand to mouth" fashion that obtains in this remote district it would not be practicable to obtain or frame any reliable or useful budget of the detailed receipts and expenditure of a labourer's family, but the following appear to be the local prices of the articles ordinarily entering into the consumption of these classes, viz., new milk (a rare luxury) 6d. to 6½d. per gallon, sour milk 3d. per gallon, tea 1s. 10d. per pound, sugar 2½d. per pound, bread 5½d. per four-pound loaf, Indian meal 7½ and oatmeal 15d. per ten, turf 3s. 6d. per ton, coal 1d. to 1½. 4s. per ton.

54. The employment of women in agricultural work may be said to be now confined to such seasons as the wives and daughters of small farmers render them in the busy seasons of spring, hay and harvest-time, and in this respect there is probably not much change as compared with former times.

55. It has, however, been stated to me that the young girls belonging to this class have generally speaking grown to be extremely lazy and idle, and are found unwilling to accept such employments as are offered to them and as are suitable to their condition in life; they are further stated to be now much addicted to extravagance and display in regard to dress—an impediment which, if just in fact, may perhaps account, in some measure at least, for the general state of indolence on the part of the small farmers which has been already fully dwelt upon.

X.—CONCLUSION

To sum up, the general condition of things in the Kinnaird Union may be thus stated:—

Of the four districts of Kinnaird, Kilgarnock, Yontar, and Soema, into which the union may be divided, it may be said of the two latter, lying in the southern half of the union, one to the east and the other to the west of the railway, that the agricultural labourer class here seems almost extinct and beyond all possible hope of revival, the holdings being now entirely worked by the farmers and their sons, the farms being too small and the labour too poor to admit of the employment of any external labour, save in these few exceptional cases already described, where the larger farmers provide in the busy season a little casual extra work for the neighbouring small farmers and their families.

To this state of things one exception has, however, to be noted.

In the neighbourhood of Soema a wealthy and improving English gentleman has lately purchased a property on which he has become a resident, and at the present moment, I learn, affording daily employment at remunerative wages to from about 25 to 30 persons.

The persons so employed consist, however, not of the ordinary labourer class, which can no longer be said to have an existence in the locality, but of the neighbouring small farmers and their sons with, I believe in addition, some tenants recently dispossessed of their holdings by the former proprietor—presumably for the non-payment of rent.

How long this new source of employment thus suddenly opened up in a district where it was so badly needed is likely to last I am unable to say, but should suppose it can only be viewed as, in a good measure at least, of a temporary character.

In the two other divisions of Kinnaird and Kilgarnock, as has been already stated, a very much better disposition of things obtains at the present moment.

There are at the present time resident in and about the towns of Kinnaird and Kilgarnock and the village of Cross Roads some 120 or so agricultural labourers who though, as it must be admitted, but indifferently remunerated as to house accommodation and surroundings, enjoy just now comfortable employment and, to a certain extent, of an exceptionally remunerative kind.

This favourable state of things must, however, as already pointed out, be in a great measure ascribed to the railway now and for the past 19 months in course of construction through the district.

When this resource fails, as it will at the outside in 9 or 10 months from the present time, the classes already denuded as enjoying the benefits of it will of course be suddenly left, to a great extent, without anything to fall back upon as a substitute for it, and must then be prepared, it is to be feared, to experience a season of severe privation, unless where they are in the meantime provided enough to secure the means of then transferring their labour to another and better market.

In such a condition of things I should find it, I confess, it called upon to do so, exceedingly difficult to offer any practical suggestion for the future improvement of the labouring classes in this union, nor could I succeed in eliciting any, either from the labourers themselves, or amongst those whose disposition towards the class is most friendly, if I except the solitary expenditure very generally urged, of providing them with additional work—presumably of a public character,—a remedy it is hardly necessary to observe, easy enough to suggest, but by no means equally so to realize in practice.

I HAVE, &c.
(Signed) W. F. O'BRIEN,
Assistant Commissioner.

APPENDIX A. I.

VILLAGE OF KILGARNOCK. PARTICULARS OF FOUR TYPICAL LABOURERS' COTTAGES, &c.

DEAN Balfour, Kilgarnock, single children, eleven persons sleeping in cottage which comprises two rooms, one room 12 feet by 11 feet, the other 12 feet by 7 feet, with a small loft for bed over these rooms. The father earns 6s. per week with food, working with farmer; son, 14 years, earns 12s. per week as labourer on railway; son 14 years, earns 11s. per week as labourer on railway. Total earnings, 11. 2s. He has half an acre planted with potatoes, for which he pays 2L., and has two goats and twelve hens. Pays 2L. 10s. for cottage.

H.-I. KILGERAN.	Timothy Sullivan, Kilgeran, seven children, ten persons sleeping in cottage which comprises two rooms, one room 10 feet by 12 feet, the other 10 feet by 7 feet, with a loft over the rooms for one bed. The father earns 6s. per week with food, working with farmer. No children earning at home. Two children in America, from whom 3l. per year is received. He has a quarter of an acre planted with potatoes, for which he pays 1l. He has three goats and eleven hens. Has cottage and two square patches of garden free.	par week on railway. Total earning, 12. 7s. He has half an acre planted with potatoes, for which he pays 3l., three goats, one pig, thirteen hens, five ducks, and one donkey.	The AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.
No. 2.	Conchob Sullivan, Kilgeran, three children, five persons sleeping in house which comprises room 17 feet by 12 feet. The father earns 13s. per week as labourer on railway. No children earning at home. Two children from whom he receives about 3l. per year. He has ten hens, but has no garden or other efforts.	per week on railway. Total earning, 12. 7s. He has half an acre planted with potatoes, for which he pays 3l., three goats, one pig, thirteen hens, five ducks, and one donkey.	No. 1.
No. 3.	Daniel Sullivan, Kilgeran, seven children, ten persons sleeping in house, which comprises two rooms, one room 14 feet by 10 feet, and the other 14 feet by 6 feet, and a loft for a bed over these rooms. The father earns 18s. as a skilled labourer on the railway. Son, 15 years, earns 9s.	per week on railway. Total earning, 12. 7s. He has half an acre planted with potatoes, for which he pays 3l., three goats, one pig, thirteen hens, five ducks, and one donkey.	No. 2.

APPENDIX A. 2.

TOWN OF KENMARE. PARTICIPARS OF THREE
TYPICAL LABORERS' Cottages.KENMARE
UNION

John Simeon, three in family. House divided into two compartments, kitchen and bedroom, the former 12½ feet by 18 feet, and the latter 14 feet by 18 feet, very badly ventilated, a small garden attached to cottage which is not cultivated this year. House is held rent free from Mr McCarthy, Kenmare, for whom Simeon is labouring.

No. 1.

Eugene Cronin, six in family. House divided by loft in two compartments, kitchen and sleeping room, both places being of same size, 18½ feet by 14 feet. Rent 2s. a week.

No. 2.

Denis Shee, Poulis Lane, Kenmare, nine in family. House divided into two compartments, kitchen and loft, both of one size, 14½ feet by 12½ feet. Rent 1s. 6d. per week.

No. 3.

MAP OF IRELAND

Showing the Working of
the Labourers (Ireland) Acts
to 31st March, 1892



The Districts in which labourers have been employed are marked in yellow. The figures in each case represent the number of labourers who had

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

I R E L A N D.

R E P O R T

BY

MR. W. P. O'BRIEN, C.B.

(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER),

UPON THE

POOR LAW UNION OF KANTURK

(CO. CORK).

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APPENDIX A.

Return of contract prices for workhouse supplies for 1882 and 1883 respectively.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

To GEORGEY DRAGE, Esq., Secretary,
Royal Commission on Labour.

Regent Arms, Keshwick,
29th August 1892

Sir,

I have the honour to report, for the information of the Royal Commissioners on Labour, that, in pursuance of the arrangement already indicated, I arrived here from Keshwick on the 14th instant, and at once entered on the duty of inspecting, in conformity with my instructions, into the conditions and circumstances under which the agricultural labourer lives and works in the Poor Law Union of Keshwick.

I immediately placed myself in communication with the Officers of the Royal Irish Constabulary, to whom, and the men under their command, I desire here to record my sense of obligation for the assistance they have everywhere afforded me, not only in supplying me with valuable local information, but also in procuring for me the attendance of labourers and farmers to give evidence, and in placing at my disposal a room in the barracks to enable me to conduct my inquiries in the different districts I visited, and in which it frequently happened that so other accommodation was available for my purpose.

They further much facilitated my proceedings by pointing out to me the situation of the numerous houses and cottages, of which I found it necessary to make a personal examination.

I likewise waited upon and invited the co-operation of the Roman Catholic clergymen in the several parishes visited by me, and am much indebted to them for the trouble I am aware they took in explaining to the members of their congregation the objects of my mission, and encouraging them to attend and lay their statements before me.

I attended the first meeting of the Board of Guardians held after my arrival in the union, furnishing the members present with copies of the inquiry notes, and I have endeavoured, I may state generally, in every way within my power to obtain reliable information from all, of whatever class, who felt sufficient interest in the object of my investigation to send me their aid in furtherance of it.

From the various poor law officials—notably the clerk of the union and his assistant—I have received much assistance, and several farmers, but many more of the labourers, have willingly attended and fully explained to me their circumstances, and the views they entertained with regard to them.

Before proceeding to deal separately with the special heads of inquiry, as enumerated in the instructions, I find it necessary to submit, for the information of the Royal Commissioners, some preliminary observations explanatory of and bearing upon the past history of the union and the present condition of things prevailing here, and which, in several respects, will be found to present features of an exceptional character.

7. The Union of Keshwick is situated in the north-west of the Co. Cork—is an entirely inland district, and is divided, for poor law purposes, into 33 separate electoral divisions, valued at 77,554, and including an area of 185,094 acres, of which about 5 per cent. may be classed as waste, with a population now of 26,171, as against, in 1861, 30,004, a reduction within the decade of 3,833, equal to nearly 13 per cent. of the previous population.

8. The baronies are, to the north, Co. Tipperary, to the east, Maline Union, to the south, Hillgrove Union; and to the west, the Unions of Trillick and Killybeggie, Co. Kerry.

9. No electoral division in the union has been scheduled as congested, though some of these in the Co. Kerry, constituting its immediate western boundary, are in that category.

10. The geological characteristics are mixed. The greater part of the union is situated in the coal measures district, to the west and north of Keshwick Town, with the limestone cropping up in the mountains at Tarr and Mothy, which lie to the west and north of Newmarket Town.

The limestone comes close to the east side of Keshwick and along by Gashstown, Ballylough, and Lisacroll, with a narrow strip along the valley of the Blackwater river.

Coal pits for the production of anthracite coal and culm, were worked by the late Mr. Nicholas Philpott Leader, M.P., and subsequently by the mining company of Ireland, on a tolerably extensive scale up to about the year 1865, and on a more limited scale up to 1880.

Since the latter date they have, I learn, ceased to be worked at all with the result that lime burning has decreased to a sensible extent throughout the district, where it was, and is much needed for the land.

11. Along its southern border the union is traversed by a long range of barren mountains, quite useless for any purpose, but for the rest the surface of the district may be described as being fairly level, though to a considerable extent undulating, save in the west and north west, where the quality of the soil is poorer, and the face of the country is hilly and uneven—indeed mountainous in character.

12. In illustration of the diversity just referred to, as regards fertility of soil, in the different districts, the following figures taken from the Rate Books and showing the valuation and acreage of one holding in each of the four sections into which the union may be divided, are submitted—

I.—NORTHERN SECTION.

E. Division.	Name.	Acreage.	Valuation.
(1) Newtown	T. Clarkson	Acres. 40	£ 40 -

II.—SOUTHERN SECTION.

(2) South	J. Buckley	40	11
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III.—EASTERN SECTION.

(3) Gashcree	D. Sullivan	40	21
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IV.—WESTERN SECTION.

(4) Ballybeg	O. Brown	40	2
--------------	----------	----	---

13. The farms are generally speaking large, 40 acres would probably be about a fair average, but they often go to 200 and higher, while on the other hand, some do not exceed 10 acres or even less.

14. The number of qualified jurors returned by the clerk of the union is a pretty fair index as to this.

The qualification of a common juror in the county Cork is in the country 40^l, and in the towns 12^l, valuation or a freehold of 20^l, and the number returned as qualified under these heads for the present year is 766.

Special jurors require here a valuation of 200^l, and the number of names returned on this list was 76, equal to a total of 842, qualified to sit in the union either as common or special jurors.

In striking contrast to this, attention may be drawn to the fact that, in the last union reported on by me—Keshmarr—even the lower qualification there prescribed only gave a total of 46 persons in all, as being entitled to sit in those capacities, though the union is, territorially, somewhat larger than that of Keshwick.

15. It so happened that some 25 years ago I was, for a long period, officially acquainted with the union of Keshwick, when acting as poor law inspector of the Cork district, and it was at that time, in a very great measure, what would have been described as an essentially village district.

On revisiting it now, however, I have been most sorely struck by the almost complete revolution that

E. IL.
KASHCREE.
Limestone.

Coal.

Fluorid
limestone.

Great dis-
tinction of
fertility of
soil.

Size of
farm.

Number of
jurors.

A contrast
with Kesh-
marr Union.

Former pe-
diment of
union.

R. H. KAPTEIN.

Daily business.

Tillage.

Endowments.

Causes of change.

Agitation as to house accommodation.

Labour League.

Agricultural husbandry.

appears to have in the interval taken place in it with respect to this.

Dairy farming is now, in every direction, the predominant element, while the amount of tillage decreases scarcely, if at all, except apparently about one-fourth of what it was within my own personal recollection.

In fact, so far, the larger part of the union, the tillage appears to be now strictly limited to providing for the wants of the farmers themselves, chiefly potatoes and oats being grown, in some districts a little wheat is sown, but green crops, as mangolds, turneps, &c. mostly.

16. A most respectable, and in every way a most reliable witness, who himself farms 100 acres, in the southern section of the union, and who, besides acting as local agent for a non-resident proprietor, Lord Lismore, is also the Government collector of income tax for more than half the union, states as to this—

"Formerly it was nearly all tillage, but this has been gradually reducing every year; the rise in the price of butter was the primary cause, and it began about 16 years ago. Only one-tenth of the land is now, at the outside, used for tillage, and it is often much less," and he states his own individual case, thus—

"Out of 100 acres that I farm, my tillage is now reduced to 3 acres only; it was until lately 16 acres, but I found I could not get labourers when I wanted them, even to store my potatoes."

Another equally reliable witness, residing near Kestock, and farming 100 acres, states, as to his own case—

"I farm my own land by grazing; I have but 6 acres of tillage, just enough for my own consumption, potatoes, oats, and wheat, only 1 acre of wheat for grinding, and oats for my own horses."

In the district of Newmarket, the head respectable states—

"It is generally dairy farming in my district, very little tillage, and it consists chiefly of potatoes and oats for their own use, the average size of farms is about 50 and up to 100 acres. The tillage might amount to about one-tenth of this, but it is often less."

17. These quotations fairly enough represent, I think, the general drift of the evidence I have received as to this, and the accuracy of which has been abundantly confirmed by what has come under my own personal observation in driving through the different localities.

18. This, then, being accepted, as I think it safely may be, as the actual state of affairs now prevailing here, it next becomes necessary to search for the cause or combination of causes that have led to so remarkable a change of circumstances, within a comparatively limited number of years, say 20 at the outside.

The first witness I have quoted, speaking with the authority of a long practical experience, has, it has been seen, assigned as the initial influence acting in this direction, the stimulation provided by the high price of butter 16 years ago, and this, assisted no doubt by the downward tendency at the same time experienced as regards tillage produce, had probably most to do, in the first instance, with bringing about the change.

Other causes were, however, in active operation at the same time in the district, and to them it is accordingly necessary that I should here specially refer—

19. As far back as the year 1871 I find that a serious and widespread agitation arose here amongst the labouring population in connection with the miserable condition of their house accommodation, but as this was restricted, in a great degree, to the stringent clauses inserted at the time in all local leases against the erection on farms of labourers' cottages, the hostility then evinced was directed rather against the landlords—as the authors of these restrictions—than against the farmers.

The establishment of a "Labour League" in the union, under industrial auspices, was the immediate outcome of this movement, and this continued to exist, with more or less vitality, until 1879 or thereabouts, when it became dissolved, and then finally re-emerged by the wider and far more important organisation of the Land League, then established throughout the county.

An attempt originating, it is here believed, in part by their local agitation on the subject, was made to deal partially with this undoubtedly crying grievance as to labourers' houses in the Land Act of 1881, but the clause relating to it was defectively framed, and it proved, in practice, abortive and ineffectual, no relief in the

matter being experienced by those concerned until the passage of the series of Labourers Acts of 1883 to 1889—of which more later on.

Meantime, however, the labourers' movement assumed in 1880 another and still more serious phase, but their agitation was, on this occasion, directed entirely against the farmers, and rested on the question of the inadequacy of the scale of wages then in vogue throughout the union.

20. This movement culminated in a general strike against work, skillfully timed so as to take effect at the commencement of the harvest operations—a circumstance which speedily brought matters to a crisis, with the result that the entire question was at once referred for final settlement to three arbitrators, one representing the landlords, the second the farmers, and the third the labourers.

I have had the advantage of seeing and examining the two latter within the last week, and have from them learnt the precise nature of the settlement then come to.

The scale of wages objected to consisted of 4s weekly where two daily meals were also given, and 7s. for those hired without food. To this scale the arbitrators agreed upon an all-round addition of 2s a week, thus raising the former rate from 4s and 7s. to 6s and 9s. respectively.

This compromise appears to have met with immediate acceptance on both sides, and it, in fact, substantially the same scale that still obtains in, at any rate, most parts of the union.

21. The victory thus secured by the labourers resulted, however, in a manner not at all favourable to their own interests—for the farmers, finding by experience that this advance in the cost of labour—taking place concurrently with a serious decline in the value of produce—necessitated some counter-action on their side, met the difficulty in two ways, viz: (1) by a general substitution of machinery for manual labour, (2) and by gradually contracting the extent of land used for tillage purposes.

This tendency on the part of the farmers has been since steadily and progressively further developed throughout the union, and, in the opinion of those best qualified to judge, with whom I have spoken on the subject, it has not yet by any means reached its final limit.

22. These observations, though somewhat longer than I quite anticipated, or could have desired, will probably sufficiently serve to explain the great change in the general agricultural condition of the union to which attention has been already drawn in this report, and they were, I think, absolutely essential as a preface to the details that are to follow before proceeding to deal with which it only remains for me to offer a few further remarks, with respect to the fiscal burdens of the union at the present time, and the extent of pauperism prevailing in it.

23. The Union of Dalhousie is situated almost entirely in the barony of Dalhousie, one of the four largest baronies in Scotland.

The railway rate in the barony, including a large railway guarantee, amounts at the present time to about 2s 9d in the pound, apart from certain special assessments in addition, which only apply to particular townships.

In addition to this there is the poor rate heavily struck, averaging about 2s 5d in the pound, but ranging, in 10 electoral divisions, from 3s to the very substantial figure of 4s 4d, to which it is to be added the second instalment of 4s 2d, the amount of the loan last year obtained from the Government under the Seed Sowing Act, and which will be payable at 4s 2d on the 1st August 1890.

24. The statistics of pauperism at the present time, and at the corresponding period 10 years ago, are as follows—

	1880	1890
Number in workhouse	227	441
Number on outdoor relief	681	888
Total	888	1,329
Average cost of food and maintenance per week	8s 7d.	2s 11½d.

From this it will be seen that while the extent of destitution, as indicated by the application of the workhouse test, shows that year the substantial reduction of 144, or nearly one third, as compared with 1882, the number is except of outdoor relief which is unaccompanied by any sort whatever, continues to be very nearly the same, a reduction of only seven being shown in the number at present referred in this form.

23. With these preliminary observations I shall now proceed to deal successively with the several points referred to me for inquiry, in the same order in which they are enumerated in the notes.

I.—THE SITUATION OF LABOUR.

24. It is certain that a dearth of labour is experienced in this season during what are known as "the busy seasons," viz., sowing time, haytime, and harvest, &c., during which periods the farmers allege they could not go on at all were it not for the aid obtained from the use of machinery. During what may be termed "the slack season," the labourers, on the other hand, complain that they can obtain little or no employment; these periods of inaction being variously estimated, by different witnesses, at from four to eight months of the year, and in this connection there can be no doubt there is, as a rule, much substantial truth.

25. There can, I think, be no doubt that there has been a great decrease in the number of labourers experienced here during the last 10 or 15 years, owing to the large emigration which has taken place; the figures as to this, given in paragraph 7 of this report, being, there can be no doubt, largely made up of this particular class and of the best and most useful members of it.

For the probable causes that have led up to this result, I beg to refer to paragraph 24.

26. The amount of migration to neighbouring districts in harvest time, &c., is now very limited and confined to a very few localities.

27. There is a very general and, probably, a perfectly well-founded opinion entertained by the employers of labour in this district that the labourers are now neither as efficient nor so healthy, nor as those met with elsewhere, owing to the circumstances that the best, youngest, and most competent are those who have emigrated, the old and infirm alone remaining behind.

II.—CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

28. With the exception of those employed as resident "servant" boys, as they are usually termed, though in reality young men, the labourers' employment in this season is now, as a rule, only casual and intermittent.

29. Hence, there are no doubt, who reside in houses on the farms, and are under yearly contract to the owners of the houses, but these are now a very limited class, and it is only, I apprehend, growing more so.

30. The hours of labour usually observed are in summer 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., and in winter daylight to dark; the farmers usually only allow three-quarters of an hour for each meal, but sometimes, it is said, no more liberal, and give an hour. It is not possible to estimate the time absorbed in going to and from work. There is no Sunday labour here, except what is indispensable.

III.—WAGES AND RENTING.

31. The current rate of wages may be stated to be, for men and servants, 8s. to 12s. a year, all food; for ordinary labourers 7s. rising to 10s. and occasionally to 12s. a week, these rates only apply where no food is given; for those working under yearly contract, and receiving daily 20 pence, the money wages may be stated at 4s. to 5s. weekly, but 5s. to 6s. are about what are actually paid, &c. being, I apprehend, the most common.

32. There is no piece-work in harvest time and in other busy seasons; 2s. to 2s. 6d. per day is about the general rate, but under circumstances of special pressure more than this, probably 3s. and 3s. 6d. may be, and no doubt often is commanded by the labourer.

33. The only addition to wages, in the way of perquisites, are those given by farmers to the labourers under yearly contract to them, and brought on their lands.

34. The position of labourers of this now very limited class is that given by an experienced and reliable witness—

"They hold by yearly tenure and pay no rent; they get 3s. weekly and two meals daily, they have generally

a small garden for cabbages, they have also generally speaking, in addition one-fourth of an acre of coarse potato ground at 2s., the ground being tilled and manured by the farmer, and they only putting down the seed, they have hives or a run in two or three goats, pigs, and fowls."

35. These wages, reckoning for 255 working days in the year would come to 12l. 16s. 18d., the potato ground is worth 2s., the two meals daily 6l. 12s. 6d., and these perquisites make worth 2l. 10s. 6d., they also get either a ton of coals or a load of turf worth 1l. 1s. 6d."

To this total—22l. 12s.—I think, may be fairly added, say, 1l. 10s. for free house, thus bringing the total annual earnings of this class to about 23l. 3s.

36. There are no other employments of any sort available in this season, but I find that almost, as a rule, the labourers here have a pig, a goat or two, fowls, and sometimes a dokey.

37. They are in this way able, there can be no doubt, to add materially to their means of subsistence, but it is absolutely impossible to apply to these sources of income a definite money value; nor, from the very casual and intermittent character of their employment, can their annual earnings be reliably calculated. Where the employment happens to be continuous, however, as in many cases it is not, the average annual earnings of an ordinary labourer may be taken as varying at from 22l. 3s. to 23l.

38. Skilled labourers would earn more, but it can hardly be said that any such exist here amongst the agricultural class.

39. One very important resource, however, still remains to be noted, namely, the substantial assistance the labourer, I find, constantly receives from their children, not only from those in service in this country, but in far larger numbers, from those who emigrated to America.

The remittances received through this latter channel are numerous and most liberal, and go a good way towards solving the otherwise almost insuperable problem as to how, in very many of the cases, the labourers continue to live during the rather protracted periods of idleness they, it is on all hands admitted, experience during the slack seasons of the year.

IV.—COUGHING ACCOMMODATION.

40. In paragraph 19 I have already referred to the condition of the labourers' house accommodation as it existed in this season in the year 1872, and to the grave social disturbances that then originated in this cause.

41. Since that date a vast and most salutary change has been brought about by the operation of the several Labourers Acts, 1862 to 1891, under the provisions of which the board of guardians have constructed no less than 322 labourers' cottages, dispersed pretty fairly and conveniently for work, so far as I have been able to judge, over the several rural districts.

42. They each contain four apartments, three on ground floor, and a loft, which admits, if necessary, of sub-division, together with two small out-offices. They appear to have been, so far as practicable, built in situations where a water supply was available.

43. The average cost per cottage was 1064., including the purchase of the half acre of land attached to each.

44. They are let to labourers at the certainly not exorbitant rent of, on an average, at the rate of 2l. yearly, though held by weekly tenure, the board of guardians keeping them in repair, and giving them free of all rates and taxes, &c.

45. It is right I should add, however, that when inspecting these houses—as I did in numerous instances and in different districts—very strong complaints were made to me as to the defective manner in which they have been constructed, and the discomfort the occupants suffer from smacking chimneys, the use of unseasoned timber, imperfect rendering of roofs, and many other defects of a like nature, and I am obliged to say, as the result of my examination into these statements, that the guardians seem to me to have been very badly served, both by their contractors and those they employed to supervise them.

46. On the other hand, however, the board of guardians on their side have, I think, good grounds for their complaints of the season of the labourers.

47. The guardians, it should be explained, pay annually to the Government, and will for 35 years continue to pay, 1,377l. in discharge of the loan contracted in connection with these houses, while the rents charged by them to the tenants, even if they were all paid, only amount to 638l. 3s. 6d., out of this exorbitantly moderate

2 21-
KAYE

Other
employers.

Annual
earnings

Excess
income

Help from
children in
America

Cottages
owned by
board of
guardians

Labourers
Act, 1872-
91.

Estimated
annual
income

Cost of
building &c.

Rent

Complaints
of defective
construction,
&c.

Money
paid by
labourers
to Government

Financial
results of
labourers.

R. H. LARSEN.	<p>sans, the receipts for the past year do not exceed 400<i>l.</i>, from which there is to be deducted—</p> <p>(1) The cost of collection, 2<i>s.</i> in the pound.</p> <p>(2) The cost of repairs, &c.</p> <p>This result is the more to be regretted, as it is to be feared it may not ultimately lead to a revolt on the part of the general body of the ratepayers against the guardians embarking in further outlay in the same direction.</p> <p>These houses are held, as already mentioned, by weekly tenure, and the rents are supposed to be, but are not paid monthly.</p>	<p>1873 and 1880, and to these paragraphs I beg, under this head, to have refer</p>	<p>THE AGENTS OF THE LANDLORDS.</p>
Inquired for last meeting.	<p>46. Notwithstanding the liberal extent to which the Kestak Board of Guardians have undoubtedly applied the <i>Labourers' Act</i>; as much desired, as well as a decided necessity, still exists for very many more such houses.</p> <p>47. Many of the labourers are having "union cottages," as they are termed, are fairly contented as to house accommodation, but very many more, I should say, not improbably the majority, are in all respects most miserably and inadequately provided for.</p> <p>48. Of these houses some are held free from the farmers with whom the labourers work, and only for so long a term as the labourer can well endure.</p> <p>Others are situated for the most part in the towns and villages, of which there are several in the union, and are held by yearly or weekly tenure from the immediate owners.</p> <p>They are generally held at low rents, as 10<i>s.</i>, 1<i>l.</i>, 1<i>l.</i> 4<i>s.</i>, and 1<i>l.</i> 10<i>s.</i> per year, but in some instances the interest in them appears to have been wholly or partially purchased by the labourers for a small sum, and in these cases they pay either very little or no rent at all.</p>	<p>VIII.—GENERAL REMARKS RELATIVE TO EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED.</p>	<p>Relations of employers and employed.</p>
Known that there is no cottage.	<p>49. The appeals for more union cottages are numerous and urgent, and as to the want of them, no doubt are, I think, acute, but what I have already described in relation to the financial aspect of the question may, if no change takes place, operate as a serious bar against further operations in this direction.</p>	<p>57. The relations at present existing between employers and employed throughout the several districts of the union are, generally speaking, described as being "fairly good," but, judging from what I have heard, and what I have myself observed, I should be disposed to doubt much if this is really the case in and about the town of Kestak.</p> <p>The members of the old board are palpably still there, and ought, I apprehend, to be easily enough learned again into a state of active and dangerous idleness.</p>	<p>Old feud.</p>
Inquired.	<p>50. Before quitting this branch of my inquiry let me add that though the union cottages have been, one and all, provided with the usual external accommodations for sanitary purposes, as no single instance that came under my notice has it been so made as of</p>	<p>IX.—THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LANDWORKERS.</p>	<p>Condition of the workers.</p>
Spoken for last meeting.	<p>In fact the seats have been entirely removed in many cases—most probably burnt as firewood—and the buildings have been devoted from their intended purpose and converted into pigsties, and fuel-houses, &c.</p>	<p>58. For the reason just referred to—amongst others of more general application—I did not deem it advisable either to convene a public meeting to the union, or to organize any local or other committees here; but, as already explained, I took steps to secure the attendance before me at the principal local centres of population, of numerous representatives of both the farming and labouring classes, the latter especially, and I think I may with some confidence assure the Royal Commissioners that the statements embodied in this report may be accepted as, upon the whole, conveying a full and reliable representation of all the material facts that it has been my duty to deal with.</p> <p>59. The industries in this union other than what has been already referred to are, it is to be regretted, exceedingly limited.</p>	<p>Subsistence.</p>
Spoken for last meeting.	<p>51. The appeals for more union cottages are numerous and urgent, and as to the want of them, no doubt are, I think, acute, but what I have already described in relation to the financial aspect of the question may, if no change takes place, operate as a serious bar against further operations in this direction.</p>	<p>60. There are two woollen factories in the union, worked by water power—one at <i>Floussington</i> and the other at <i>Hascock</i>—both are of recent origin, and both are, I understand, of a limited character as yet, though there may I believe not improbably be some expansion in their future operations.</p>	<p>Factories.</p>
Spoken for last meeting.	<p>52. The existing cottages are all located in rural districts; except as above, there have been no allotments in this union under section 10, 48 and 49 <i>Act</i>, cap. 77, and section 12, 49 and 50 <i>Act</i>, cap. 59.</p> <p>53. Labourers living in houses other than union cottages are, however, to a large extent, though not at all universally, able to obtain from a neighbouring farmer a plot of potato ground of one-half, one-quarter, or one-eighth of an acre in extent, the labourers paying for the accommodation either by supplying the farmer himself, an arrangement which the farmers appear to prefer, or where the farmer supplies it, then by a money payment, at the rate of from 6<i>s.</i> to 12<i>s.</i> and 10<i>s.</i> per acre, according to the district and quality of the land.</p>	<p>61. The state of the coal mining industry has been already dealt with in paragraph 10.</p> <p>It was one of much value to the district, and an accommodation was, I am informed, attributable, not to any falling off in the extent or quality of the coal, but rather to the substitution by the local farmers of imported chemical manure for lime, the burning of which had constituted the chief source of profit obtained by the mining company up to that time.</p> <p>62. The only remaining industry to be noted is that of the newly established <i>concretes</i>.</p> <p>Five of these establishments have been already started within the union, and there are two others in adjacent parts of the neighbouring unions of <i>Mallow</i> and <i>Milstreet</i>.</p> <p>Of these some are proprietary and others belong to co-operators. One of the largest of them is that at <i>Chatterton</i>, and as the facts connected with it may, I think, be regarded as being fairly representative of the general working of these institutions, I give them a place here.</p>	<p>Coal.</p>
Spoken for last meeting.	<p>54. No benefit societies exist in any part of this union.</p>	<p>63. It was first established in 1880, with a capital of 1,000<i>l.</i> in 80 shares, and held almost exclusively, I learn, by the farmers of the surrounding district.</p> <p>When milk is most plentiful the daily deliveries then reach about 4,000 gallons, the price ranging, according to the current price of butter, from 3<i>d.</i> to 5<i>d.</i> per gallon.</p> <p>At the beginning and end of the season the quantity received falls, of course, a good deal below this.</p> <p>All the residue—both the milk remaining after separation of the cream and after the conversion of the cream into butter—belongs to the farmer, but it is stated to be not good for the purpose of calf rearing, all the only element being extracted in the process of separation.</p>	<p>Co-operators.</p>
Spoken for last meeting.	<p>55. The few stock kept by labourers may be said to be confined to pigs, geese, and fowls, a cow is to be met with very rarely—I only met with one.</p> <p>There are no bees.</p>	<p>64. There are, it must be admitted, be no doubt that they have already achieved not inconsiderable recovery, in greatly raising the quality and value of</p>	<p>Customer community.</p>
Spoken for last meeting.	<p>56. No benefit societies exist in any part of this union.</p>	<p>65. The report by farmers to these newly created local institutions is said to be steadily on the increase in this union.</p> <p>66. There are, it must be admitted, be no doubt that they have already achieved not inconsiderable recovery, in greatly raising the quality and value of</p>	<p>Residue.</p>
Spoken for last meeting.	<p>57. No benefit societies exist in any part of this union.</p>	<p>67. The report by farmers to these newly created local institutions is said to be steadily on the increase in this union.</p>	<p>Employment afforded.</p>
Spoken for last meeting.	<p>58. No benefit societies exist in any part of this union.</p>	<p>68. There are, it must be admitted, be no doubt that they have already achieved not inconsiderable recovery, in greatly raising the quality and value of</p>	<p>Advantage.</p>

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER.General
Notes.Description
of labourer.Description
of labourer.Size of
family.Earnings
and cost of
living.Wages
Payable
at
week.

Budget.

Workhouse
costs.

Irish butter in the public market, and to have accomplished this was, undoubtedly, doing a great deal.

These are, however, as the question presents itself to my mind, drawbacks, and rather serious ones too, to be considered as the other side.

65. The inevitable effect of the general adoption of such institutions in this country must be, I apprehend, to reserve from the wives and daughters of the labourer a healthy and, at the same time, most valuable source of industrial occupation and training, in every way peculiarly adapted to their position and habits of life for which it will not be easy to discover in any other direction, an equally suitable or sufficient substitute, and the want of which now, on the part of those by no means insignificant classes of the working community, may—it is quite conceivable—on the many possible contingencies of the future, be found to ultimately result in serious loss to the farmers themselves.

66. The ownership of property in the union is considerably divided, the largest estate in it was that of the Earl of Eglinton, and this has recently been sold under the Land Commission, or, I understand, exceptionally favourable terms, viz., 18 years' purchase, to the tenant, over 200 of whom have, I believe, thus become the owners of their holdings.

Similar sales, affecting probably over 30 tenants in all, have also, I am informed, been effected on two small estates—one in the west, and the other in the east of the union.

67. The labourers are fairly distributed, I think, in regard to those occupying the union cottages, in other cases it is unequal as they, in former times almost necessarily gravitated to a large extent towards the towns and villages, the reason for which will be found explained in paragraph 19, and it is probable that the reason there pointed to operated pretty equally on both large and small estates.

68. The usual size of the farms has been already described in paragraph 12, and it may be stated as a general proposition that on large and small farms, both alike, the employment of labour is now everywhere restricted within the narrowest possible limits; while, in the smallest class, the work is entirely done by the farmers themselves, and their families.

69. While the reduction that has taken place within the past 20 years in the extent of cultivated land in the union has been, of course, highly adverse to the interests of the agricultural labourer, this has been counterbalanced on the other hand by the serious drain occasioned by the emigration that has taken place amongst the members of this class, and the consequent very substantial advance in the general rate of wages accruing from this.

There has been also in recent years an appreciable decline in the cost of most of the principal articles of consumption in daily use amongst them.

70. I have endeavoured, but have found it practically impossible to obtain here materials for framing anything like even a fairly reliable budget, showing the actual receipts and expenditure of a typical labourer.

71. Their resources are too mixed and variable, and their expenditure too uncertain and unmethodical to admit of its being done with even an approach to accuracy, but, as bearing on the point, I take leave to annex hereto, marked A, a return the clerk of the union has been good enough to prepare, showing, in detail, the contract prices in 1882 and 1883 respectively, of the articles in use in the Kintark workhouse, as well as the general average cost of maintaining an inmate at each of these periods.

From this return it will be seen that a general and sensible decline has taken place in this respect between the dates specified, and that, as a consequence, the cost of supporting an inmate in the workhouse has fallen by 4½ pence per head weekly, this being equivalent, in the case of a family of seven persons, a very common

number in this country, to a saving of 3s. 7½d. per week.

72. That the position of the labourer in this union, at the present time, and in almost every respect, is far better and more independent than it was 10 or 15 years ago, admits of no doubt whatever.

I must, however, be understood as partially excepting from this statement the particular labourers whose lease accommodation I have already referred to, as still awaiting and loudly calling for improvement.

73. Some acknowledgment was readily made by the farmers themselves that the land in, at the present time, in almost most of much that would look after employment, greatly needed by the labourers, and, at the same time, prove conservative to themselves, thus in the shape of draining, fencing, manuring, &c.

74. All this, it is truly admitted, is required, and is now altogether neglected, but the answer, I may say, all the farmers that I questioned as to this is that, under existing conditions it is not possible for them to provide the necessary outlay for these purposes, and that nothing effective is to be looked for in this direction until they (the occupiers) become likewise the owners of the soil.

X.—CONCLUSIONS.

75. I have now, I think, gone in detail through the several points to which my inquiries have been directed, and as to which information was desired.

I have referred so fully, I trust not too fully, into the facts of the case under each separate head dealt with, that little or nothing remains, I think, to be added here in the shape of general observations.

While I, during my proceedings, carefully impressed on the several labourers who came before me that I had no power to do for them anything whatever—my business being simply to ascertain facts for the information of others—I afforded them the fullest opportunity of stating to me unreservedly, anything in their present circumstances and condition of which they considered they had reasonable ground for complaining.

As the result the statements made to me may be thus summed up:—

Those who have hitherto not succeeded in obtaining cottages from the board of guardians desire to do so, adding, however, that the extent of ground attached should be increased from a half to an entire acre, to admit of a rotation of crops, while those who have secured such cottages urge that the allowance of ground should be increased to three acres—not, they state, with a view to increased tillage, but to enable them to keep a cow to give milk to their families.

Of those objects it may be pointed out that the first has been already provided for, where the local authorities favour it, by the provision in that regard contained in the Act of last session, 55 Vict., c. 7; and, as to the second, it need only be observed that no enactment permitting such an arrangement has been yet placed upon the Statute Book, nor seems at all likely to be so.

Such claims are agreed in representing, as their chief grievance, the want of continuous employment, and the neglect of the farmers to afford them any assistance in this way during the winter and other slack seasons of the year. This it must, I think, be conceded is, for those concerned, a grievance of a very practical character, and constitutes, in my mind, the real difficulty surrounding the question of the conditions and circumstances under which the agricultural labourer at the present time lives and works in the Kintark Union.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. P. O'BRIEN,
Armistice Commissioner.

R. H.
KANTNER.General
position of
labourer as
compared
with former
and future.Collection
of land.Farmers
own as to
their own
portion.Labourers
own as to
their own
own work.More
work.

More land.

In Vol. 2, p. 1.

More work.

See in do
this, p. 10.

APPENDIX A

KENTUCKY, UNITED STATES.

REVIEW OF CURRENT PRICES of the principal articles of WORKHOUSE CONSUMPTION for the years ended 25th March 1892 and 1892

Name of Articles		Unit	Price		
			1891	1892	
White bread	-	per 4 lbs.	5 s. d. 0 0 5½	5 s. d. 0 0 3½	} Manufactured in workhouse.
Brown bread	-	"	0 0 4½	0 0 3½	
Oatmeal	-	per ton	12 0 0	14 19 3	
Indian meal	-	"	7 0 0	5 16 3	
Rice	-	"	12 0 0	14 0 0	} Manufactured in workhouse.
Sweetcorn	-	per gal.	0 8 8	0 0 9½	
Batterman's	-	"	0 0 3	0 0 4	
Beef (without shank or dag)	-	per lb.	0 8 6	0 0 5	
Tea	-	"	0 2 0	0 2 0	} Manufactured in workhouse.
Soft sugar	-	"	0 0 2	0 0 2	
Whisky	-	per gal.	0 14 10	0 18 8	
Soap (tallow, brown)	-	per cwt.	1 11 6	1 1 6	
Candles (household, wax)	-	per lb.	0 0 6	0 0 5	} Manufactured in workhouse.
Coal (Newport red ash)	-	per ton	1 0 5	1 0 4	
Coal (Scotch)	-	"	0 12 0	0 16 4	
Blankets	-	per ft.	0 2 0	0 3 0	
Rings	-	each	0 6 2	0 7 0	} Manufactured in workhouse.
Grey calico	-	per yard	0 0 2	0 0 2	
Flannel	-	"	0 1 9½	0 3 4	
Check	-	"	0 0 ½	0 0 6	
Frisson	-	"	0 5 6	0 2 0	} Manufactured in workhouse.
Cardigan	-	"	0 1 10	—	
Best leather	-	per ft.	0 2 0	0 1 5	
Wey leather	-	"	0 2 0	0 1 ½	
Oat straw	-	per ton	1 2 6	1 4 6	

22nd August 1892

(Signed)

THOMAS GOSNELL,
Clerk of Union.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR,

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

I R E L A N D.

R E P O R T

BY

MR. W. P. O'BRIEN, C.B.

(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER),

UPON THE

POOR LAW UNION OF NAAS,

(COUNTIES KILDARE AND WICKLOW.)

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

To GEOFFREY DRAGE, Esq., Secretary,
Royal Commission on Labour.

Monistown, County Dublin,
September 29, 1892.

SIR, I HAVE the honour to report, for the information of the Royal Commissioners on Labour, that, pursuant to the arrangement previously made with Mr. Little, Senior Assistant Commissioner, I arrived at Naas on the 5th instant, for the purpose of inquiring locally into the conditions and circumstances under which the agricultural labourer lives and works, at the present time, in that union.

2. Having in my previous reports detailed the steps taken by me, on arrival in each union in furtherance of the objects of my visit, it is only necessary for me to observe here that, so far as practicable, I pursued the same course on this occasion, with the like result of experimenting on the part of all those appealed to by me, including landlords, farmers, labourers, county and union officials, and others, similar readiness to afford me the information I sought for from them.

3. I attended on the 7th instant the weekly meeting of the board of guardians for the purpose of explaining to the members the precise nature and scope of my inquiry, and inviting their co-operation and assistance in the matter, and I desire to express here my sense of obligation for the numerous and valuable reports with which I was subsequently favoured by them as the result of this appeal.

4. I have, also been much assisted in the county surveyor, the acting clerk of the union, the several relieving officers, and such of the dispensary medical officers as I had occasion to make reference to, for the willing and important help I experienced at their hands.

5. To the officers and men of the Royal Irish Constabulary I can only repeat the acknowledgments I have already made in my reports on the unions of Kilmalee and Ballynure, of the intelligence and labour with which they everywhere placed at my disposal the results of their accurate and intimate local knowledge and experience.

6. Before proceeding to deal in detail with the several heads of inquiry to which the attention of the Assistant Commissioners has been specially directed, I take leave, in accordance with the rule herein to be observed by me, to submit a few preliminary remarks explanatory of the general character and circumstances of the union now under review.

7. Of the three poor law unions comprehended in the county of Kildare, viz., Athy, Clonsilla, and Naas, the last named is the central and in every respect the most important.

It is an entirely inland shire, and is divided for poor law purposes into six separate electoral divisions, of which 44 are situated in the county Kildare and the remaining four constituting in great part the eastern side of the union in the adjoining county of Wicklow.

The area of the entire union is 298,187 acres, including, however, in the north-western section a considerable part of the well-known bog of Allen. The poor law valuation is £34,188*s.* and the population is now 68,375, as against 63,243, the return for 1881, this being equivalent to a reduction within the last decade of 1/10, or about 7*5* per cent. of the previous population.

8. The boundaries of the union are: north, the union of Clonsilla; south, the union of Athy; east, the counties of Wicklow and Dublin; and west, the King's and Queen's counties.

9. The general face presented by the county is, as a rule, level, with its parts occasional undulations, but to the east it is hilly in character, and the county Wicklow portion is

towered by a range of mountains in part available for cultivation, but chiefly used for grazing purposes, and on the slopes of which are worked some valuable granite quarries, situated on the property of the Marquis of Waterford.

10. The soil varies a good deal in the different districts of the union. The land on the whole may be pronounced to be good, and much of it excellent.

Nearly three-fourths of the county Kildare part of the union, save on limestone ground, extending from beyond Killybeg to the north-east, to the town of Kildare, in the south-west, and beyond it.

In the north-western section, as Robertstown and the five adjoining electoral divisions of Kilmeag, north, Kilmeag, south, Tynahoe north, Tynahoe south, and Rathmore, bog is encountered up to the extent of considerably more than one eighth, perhaps one sixth, of the entire area, and along the fringe of the county Wicklow, and a small bit of the county Dublin, is met clay shale, which is considered a fair description of stone for rubble masonry.

11. In the county Wicklow portion of the union the formation is granite in the hill districts, and clay shale in the lower levels.

12. In the south-western section of the union is situated the famous common known as the Curragh of Kildare, a plain covering an area of about 5,000 acres, and constituting at the present time the camp and headquarters of the Curragh Military District—the Alderson of Ireland.

13. While, as already stated, the general character of the soil of Naas Union may be described as of exceptional excellence and fertility, there are still to be noted in these respects some rather wide variations observable in particular parts of it.

In illustration of this and of the great difference exhibited in the production of area in valuation in the different sections into which, for convenience of reference as to this, the union may be divided, the following figures taken from the rate books may be of some interest, and are accordingly here submitted, viz.—

I.—NORTH-WESTERN (BOG) SECTION.

Electoral Division.	Area.	Valuation.
Kilmeag, North	5,389	1,262
Rathmore	4,319	1,007
Tynahoe, North	8,917	2,000
Total	18,625	4,269

II.—SOUTH-EAST (HILL) SECTION. (COUNTY WICKLOW.)

Electoral Division.	Area.	Valuation.
Kilbride	18,334	4,073
Blenheim	15,778	5,014
Lacken	17,718	1,880
Total	51,830	9,967

B-211
NaasIII.—CENTRAL, SOUTH-WEST AND NORTH-EAST
SECTIONS

Electoral Division	Acre.	Value, 1891.
Backcastles - - - - -	4,265	11,882
Oggahard - - - - -	4,244	4,300
Kill - - - - -	4,788	5,268
Kilbane - - - - -	4,428	9,317
Carragh - - - - -	3,125	4,671
Horrisstown-Jeller - - - -	4,667	6,519
Total - - - - -	29,517	47,857

Resident
Naas.

14. This union, enjoys, in a quite exceptional degree, the great advantage of possessing a large class of resident gentry who live continuously upon their properties, and, besides taking an active and useful part in all matters of local administration, afford to the labouring population, throughout the year, much valuable employment, and contribute in various other ways to the general welfare and prosperity of these respective districts.

See of
Naas and
Naasstown
to Naas. They
are devoted.

15. Throughout the greater part of the union the farms are, as a rule, large—many of them very considerable—holdings valued at more than £100, and up to £600, £600, £800, and even higher, being quite generally met with in different directions.

Naas
County.

There is very little dairy farming of any kind pursued in any part of the union, the land being in the main just retained to chiefly devoted to the purpose of rearing and fattening cattle and herds of sheep and swine, chiefly the latter, this being no doubt the purpose for which the productivity and character of the soil are found to be best adapted.

Naas
County.

Except in the case of farms of the smaller class, and where the natural fertility of the soil—as in the case of renowned bog land—renders it unsuitable for the purposes of grazing and rearing, there is now very little tillage farming to be met with, as a general rule, beyond the production of such crops and roots as the farmers may find necessary to meet their own particular demands.

Naas
County.

16. A gentleman residing within a few miles of Naas, who farms 200 acres, informed me that he has now only about 1½ acres of tillage—roots for his cattle; he added that he would be glad to have more, but that it would not pay him, under existing difficulties as to labour supply, &c.

Naas
County.

Of two working farmers, specially recommended to me as good witnesses, are said to be as follows:—

Naas
County.

- "I have 3½ acres, about half a mile from Naas."
- "I have 150 acres. I have about 15 acres of tillage—potatoes, oats, green crops—and 2 acres of wheat to keep the house in a mill—just what I require for my own purposes—it would not pay to till for any other purpose," and he adds, "the arrangements for generally adopted in this district are just as I have described, except that a great many do not till half as much as I do."

Naas
County.

The second witness I have referred to says on the same subject:—

Naas
County.

- "I live about a mile from Naas. I have 7½ acres, and have 110 acres of grazing land in addition. I have 6 acres of tillage, oats and turnips chiefly, and a little potatoes. The tillage is still getting less, the potato soil has become coarse in land to this, while the trade in our parts there can be no increased demand for labour here, if the price of corn got up there would be more employment. You will not follow what you are doing by."

Naas
County.

17. Not to multiply evidence unduly as to this, it is only necessary for me to add to the quotations just given that the result of my own personal observation and information, obtained when recently visiting almost every part of the union, has been to enable me to fully confirm what has been quoted as being an accurate representation of the general state of things that now obtains in the district.

Naas
County.

18. While no such revolution, in regard to the substitution of pasture for tillage, as is presumed to, for example, Keshmuck Union has taken place here, there can be no doubt that the extent of the latter was formerly much more considerable than it now is, and that the extent of tillage farming, throughout almost every part of the district, has been of late years steadily and progressively declining, the opinion of some of the best judges I have been able to consult on the subject being that the fall

measure of this reduction has not been as yet by any means attained.

A very intelligent farmer, who is also extensively engaged in business, connected by me at Ballymore-Eustace, says on this point:—

"I farm 150 acres, and have about 11 acres of tillage, for my own use potatoes, oats, and turnips."

"During the last few years tillage has distinctly declined here, owing to fall in prices, increase of wages, and uncertainty of climate. I think it will diminish still further; it does not pay, and it is more from necessity than choice that people now till as little."

19. In the six clerical divisions constituting the north-western section of the union, as well as in the four electoral divisions in the southern extremity of the county Wicklow, an entirely different state of things to that just described has to be noted.

In these the farms are, as a rule, of small extent, and the soil of an inferior character, as already shown in paragraph 14.

With respect to the former, a witness will acquainted with the district states:—

"The general run of the farms in all these, some of them, some less, about one-third is generally in tillage—potatoes, oats, and turnips, size about 10 to 15 acres, for growing sheep, cattle, and sheep, for which it is good; the remaining one-third is mostly, or partly for their own use, and partly for sale. The small farmers try to do with as little labour as possible, they cannot afford to pay wages." And with respect to the latter, or country Wicklow portion of the district, another witness declares:—

"In the county Wicklow there is little or no tillage, I am 2 acres. In Wicklow there is not much tillage either, the farms are about from 15 to 20 acres in size, it is nearly all mountain, and they use it partly for growing cattle, but chiefly sheep, for which it is best suited. You would not see with any of them more than an acre, or half an acre, of potatoes and an acre of oats, no turnips, these do all their own work."

20. This then being in brief, the general character of the union it only remains that, before concluding these preliminary remarks, I should add a few references to the assumed benefits of a public nature it is at the present time subject to, and with respect to which its condition will be found to compare, or rather contrast, very favourably with those other districts of the country with which it has been hitherto my duty to deal in the presentation of the present inquiry.

21. The county Wicklow portion of the union is wholly or partly situated in eight different baronies, and during the past twelve months the total population of the county was assessed on these ranged from a minimum of 14,016 to a maximum of 15,016, and in the county Wicklow, where the four electoral divisions of Naas Union in that county are included in the barony of Tethinam Lower, the total ordinary rate for the same period was 15,016.

22. The four rates lately struck in the union only average 15,016, ranging from a minimum in Ballymore East of 14,016, to a maximum of 15,016 in Ballymore North, the least favourably circumstanced electoral division in the union.

23. There was no loan contracted in this union under the Poor Relief Act of December 1860, and, consequently, there is no debt to be here noted as will amounting legislation under this head.

24. The statistics of pauperism at the present time and at the corresponding period 10 years ago are as follows:—

	1881	1891
Number in workhouse - - - -	228	244
Number on out-door relief - - -	745	339
Total - - - - -	1,003	1,008
General average cost of food and accommodation per week - - - -	3 4½	3 4½

From this it will be seen that while here, as in other cases, the workhouse statistics indicate an improvement in the condition of the population as compared with 10 years ago, the reduction in this respect amounting to 6½ or

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about 35 per cent. the number in receipt of out-door relief, to which, let it be again observed, no test attaches, shows, on the contrary, an increase, though in this instance only of a trifling amount.

25 This concludes the general preliminary observations I desire to offer by way of preface to my report upon the several special heads of my inquiry, with which I shall now proceed to deal in the usual order.

I.—SUPPLY OF LABOUR.

26 The general purport of the evidence I have been able to collect as to this is that farmers find it impossible to obtain a sufficient supply of good and skilful labourers during the barest time, and other busy seasons, whilst the labourers, on the other hand, complain that, during about half of the year, they are unable to obtain any employment at all, and have to live, during these periods, in a condition of the severest privation, being at such times nearly dependent, it is stated, for the means of subsistence on the alms their wives obtain from the generosity of the neighbouring farmers.

Both of these representations appear to me, on the result of the best examination of the circumstances I have been able to make, to be substantially well founded in fact.

27 Representations to the effect just stated have been made to me in different parts of the union, but the town of Naze and its immediate vicinity, being by far the largest and most important centre of the labouring population, the facts connected with it will, I think, afford the best illustration as to the general state of the case under this head.

28 The labourers in this district having selected seven of their body, including the secretary of the local Labour League, to represent to me their views, I attended by appointment at the hall-room of the workhouse after working hours on the 12th instant to hear their statements.

As the evidence of Michael Walsh, the secretary of the Labour League, was concerned in by the others who were present, I specially quote it here—

He says: "There are 300 labourers within a radius of three miles of Naze, of whom 100 are 'my reserve men who do not get employment, and who are injurious to the interests of the other' labourers. I would suggest that both on this and their own account they should be taken back to the 'army and employed'."

"They are as a rule inefficient workmen."

"Taken as a whole the labourers in Naze cannot get more than 160 days' work in the year; the general wages for these days would not average 2s. a day. Their wives are obliged to go into the country, when they are idle, to ask for food, but the maintenance got in this way is very scanty, the condition of the poor people in winter time is next to starvation."

"Better and cheaper dwellings are required in the town, and they (the labourers) are in favour of getting as near the town as possible half an acre of ground, to remedy the want of employment."

"I would suggest public works, such as the ruin damage of the town."

"I do not consider that less than 2s. 6d. a day would suffice to keep body and soul together."

Dr. Joseph Smyth, who has been for 17 years the medical officer of the Naze dispensary district, says as to this—

"It is true that a large number of the labourers cannot get work for more than 160 days in the year. I have seen them as I cannot account for how they live during the slack seasons. When there is the least sickness out-door relief is given liberally."

Mr. Christopher Carroll, the relieving officer for Naze district, an exceedingly intelligent and well informed officer, says—

"There are about 350 agricultural labourers in my district."

"Of these about 250 live in the town of Naze and the others are dispersed about the country, chiefly in detached houses, but in villages also."

"I think that 265 days would fairly represent the number of working days in the year, the majority would calculate on having employment for that number of days, but some would have less. They work for different people."

"A good many of the labourers are my reserve men, who are not good labourers and are only employed when absolutely necessary; perhaps about 100 of the labourers are of this class. Reserve men

or pensioners who have had a day military pay would, perhaps, get 200 days' work in the year. But the really good workmen can command employment on all the usual working days."

29 It is, I think, certain that there has been during the last 10 or 15 years a decrease, owing to emigration, in the number of good labourers in this union, but possibly not so in regard to those of a different stamp, such as those of the ex-military type.

30 There is no emigration of labourers experienced here at particular seasons.

31 As to the relative efficiency of labourers, of the present and past time, there can, I take it, be little doubt that any comparison made as to this must result in favour of the latter, the means being, partly, the emigration of the best of the class, and, to a secondary degree, the introduction of machinery, which has deprived those of the instruction and experience in skilled labour acquired under the old system.

As compared with other districts, it is probable that not much difference exists in this respect.

II.—CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

32 The conditions of employment vary considerably in this union; many are engaged from year to year, and are retained continuously in the same employment.

The great majority are, however, engaged for week shorter terms, chiefly by the week or day; but even those so engaged are, it is confidently stated, when really efficient, able, in most parts of the union, to command continuous employment throughout the year, on the usual working days, which are estimated, it has been seen, at about 265, 100 being deducted for holidays, church holidays, and days on which out-door work cannot be performed, owing to inclemency of the weather.

Less favourable representations as to this have, however, been strongly urged in some of the localities visited by me, and I accordingly are then a place here.

This is the village of Bonedon, situated in the northern extremity of the union, where the labourers present when I visited the locality selected one of their body, named Patrick Reilly, to act as spokesman for them, he says—

"I think 9s. or 10s. a week, even at constant employment, is too little to support a family; I think it ought to be 12s. a week. Constant work and a plot of ground, an acre, or half an acre would be sufficient to supply the family all the year; there is no employment for half the year for the labourers, and the village is still suffering."

The relieving officer for the north-western district, in which this village (Bonedon) is included, says as to this, in regard to his district generally, including all clerical districts—

"I am sure there are 300 labourers in my district who cannot command continuous employment all the year, and who have no other resources; but these are generally the sons of men who are always employed themselves, and it is surprising that which makes the others so poor, they are idle for six months of the year."

In another district, in the northern part of the union, the constabulary sergeant says on the same subject—

"There are about 120 agricultural labourers in my district, of whom about 40 live in the town of Killoffer."

"About three-fourths of the entire number have continuous employment, and the remaining one-fourth for about six months of the year."

The state of the facts as to this in the town of Naze, by far the most important part of the union as regards this question, has been already fully referred to in paragraphs 27 and 28, and will therefore for no further reference to it here.

33 The hours of labour most generally observed throughout the union, except where the employment is of some special nature, necessitating a different arrangement, are in summer from 5 a.m. to 6 p.m., and in winter daylight to dusk, two hours being most commonly allowed for meals.

The time compared going to and from work varies as much, in accordance with the distance, that it cannot be accurately stated. It is not usually included in the hours of labour, which may be said to average, generally speaking, about 10 hours daily.

Sunday labour may be said to be quite exceptional, and is strictly limited to those classes of servants whose special duties render it unavoidable.

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III.—WAGES AND EARNINGS.

36 Corresponding with the diversity of soil and circumstances observable in different parts of this union, a varying scale of wages is also found to prevail. The general rates for ordinary labourers ranging from 9s. to 12s. a week.

In the best circumstanced parts of the union fairly efficient labourers not, it is stated, always command the latter rate; and in the case of gardeners, shepherds, &c. 14s. and 15s. per week are paid.

In less favoured localities 9s. to 10s. is estimated to be the general rate; and 5s. to 7s. where food is only supplied. In spring and harvest time the scale is everywhere much higher, ranging from 3s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. per day.

There is no piece-work known in this union.

The usual mode of payment adopted is by cash, weekly.

37. There are no perquisites as a rule, but sometimes the labourer gets a few hoes and garden tools from his employer, and 1d. in addition to wages as harvest money, occasionally milk, cabbage, censure for potatoes, and grass for a goat or cow are given; and in the case of hinds in addition to a horse, fuel, potatoes, and milk may be allowed.

Such advantages as these are not, however, enjoyed by the general body of ordinary agricultural labourers in Naas Union, and must be regarded as being the exception not the rule in the general conditions of their engagement.

38. Though there are certain industries of a special nature in operation in particular districts, which will be fully referred to later on, it may be here stated, as a general proposition, that the class of agricultural labourers here, generally, are employed in any kind of work connected with agriculture open to them in any part of the union.

37. There are, however, certain aids to their wages enjoyed by them, in the shape of pigs and fowl reared by their wives, and plots of various potato ground given them by the farmers, free of rent, in consideration of the labour—and, though it is not easy to fix on these and other similar resources a definite money value, there can be no doubt they contribute very materially to better the general condition of the class.

38. The estimated annual savings, when the employment is continuous, may be stated to be:—

Ordinary labourers, 28s. 8s. to 31l. 4s.

Skilled labourers, 30l.

Shepherds, 41l. 2s., with, in certain cases, special allowances.

Men in charge of houses, 31l. 4s. to 36l. 8s.

Where only casual employment is obtainable, the precise extent of which is not known, it is obviously impossible to give under this head any estimate that could be accepted as at all reliable.

IV.—COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.

39. The house accommodation of the labouring classes in this union has undoubtedly not yet been brought into anything like a satisfactory or healthy condition, though an important step in that direction has been already taken by the board of guardians in the execution of the powers conferred upon them by the several Acts (Ireland) Acts, 1885-91, viz. —

46 & 47 Vict. c. 60 (1883)

48 & 49 Vict. c. 77 (1885)

49 & 50 Vict. c. 59 (1886)

54 & 55 Vict. c. 71 (1891)

These provisions, it may be here observed, have been during the last session of Parliament materially extended by the important provision contained in the Act 55 Vict. c. 7, a 3 increasing the quantity of ground that may be occupied with a cottage from one half to an entire statute acre.

Under the provisions of these statutes the board of guardians have, I find, erected in several parts of the rural districts of the union, in all 123 labourers' cottages, each of which is attached half an acre of land, let by them, at the extremely moderate rent of 1s. per week, to the labourers selected as being best entitled to them, and who—I am glad to learn—have given on that point no ground for complaint or regards punctuality in the payment of that amount.

I have inspected as many of these cottages as I was able to meet with in travelling through the different districts.

They each contain four apartments, all on the ground floor, no loft, the kitchen is 12x9, and two bedrooms are each 12x7, and the fourth apartment, intended to be used either as a scullery or occasional bedroom, is 8x7. To each cottage are attached two outbuildings, viz. —(1) a pig

house; (2) a small house for sanitary purposes—for which here, as elsewhere, it appears to be rarely if ever made use of.

The attached plots are generally speaking suitably cropped, and the houses properly constructed, except that, in some cases, the chimneys smoke, and the kitchen grates are not unusually, I think, complained of as being too narrow for cooking purposes.

40. In the erection of these cottages the board of guardians have taken an important step in a right and very necessary direction; but it is equally certain, I think, that very much more remains to be done before they can be said to have, in this respect, discharged themselves of the responsibility which the Legislature has now imposed upon all such local bodies, in relation to this matter of the housing of the labouring classes.

On this subject the chairman of the board of guardians, an experienced and practical agriculturalist, who takes a most earnest and sympathetic interest in this question, writes as follows:—

"There is only one point which I wish to emphasise, and that is that if the agricultural labourers are to be put on an equality they should all have the same advantages conferred on them as those fortunate few who have succeeded in getting cottages under the Labourers' Act, without this there must be a strong feeling of jealousy, and for such there are very good grounds." And he, in another reference to it, says:—

"And here it would not be out of place, in giving particulars such as is sought for, if I might venture a suggestion as to how to improve the condition of the labouring class without entirely clashing with the interests of others; it would be to purchase up every labourer's house in the country from the owner—whether the owner be a farmer or a landlord—and then let those houses at least some of them—as are fit for habitation, to the labourers, adding in each case the statutory half acre of land, so the boards of guardians are doing throughout the country.

"My object would be to place every labouring man in the same position of independence, so that he could sell his labour to the best employer, and not be hampered by being obliged to work for any one individual. I have some experience of this subject, and I do not hesitate to say that ultimately it will or must be done, as the class of labourers who are now living under the boards of guardians are far and away better off than those who are living as cottiers under farmers, for while the one is comparatively independent the other is not so, and he must work for the owner of his cottage, or be subject to be dismissed if he leaves the employment."

The Rev. T. Morris, F.P., Naas, states with reference to the town labourers:—

"It seems to be the general opinion that there is a sufficient supply of labourers in this town for the work to be done, but there are perhaps 40 houses specially provided with houses, I need not describe them as they are, but in 20 cases they certainly could not be much worse.

"The rents, too, are high. Half a crown per week for a little, cold, damp house with two rooms, and an earthen floor in both, is too much."

The medical officer of Naas district says as to this:—

"I find that as a sanitary point of view these houses are objectionable. I think there is a want of more houses of a proper description. A considerable number of them should be in the outskirts of the town, to replace houses now unfit for habitation and incapable of being made so."

On the same subject the relieving officer of Naas district deposes as follows:—

"They (the labourers) generally live in houses with two rooms, sleeping room and kitchen; the majority have no garden, others have very small ones. They pay for these from 1s. 6d. to 3s. a week, according to size and repair of cottages. Some are good, and some very bad."

The views entertained as to this by the labourers themselves will be found embodied—paragraph 28—in the evidence of Michael Walsh, secretary of the local Labour League.

In company with the medical officer and the relieving officer I visited a considerable number of the houses in question, in the town of Naas, and the observation suggested to me by this examination is that, while some of them are of a very fair description, the others are, in numerous instances, open to all the objections that have been so strongly urged against them.

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41. In the outlying districts of the union the condition of things is as in the west.

In some of those visited by me the labourers are in most respects, and as a rule, fairly and conveniently circumstanced as to house accommodation. I would specially instance, as examples of this, Heston and Ballymore-Eubank, but in others it is different.

I visited some houses in the north-western section of the union, near Allwood, and also at a place named Hodgestown, near the village of Donagh, which I found to be of a very wretched description, and as to which the relieving officer of this district deposes as follows:—

"The houses in Kilsnagat north and south and Retheran electoral divisions are the worst I ever saw, worse than those at Hodgestown. Often I had to creep on hands and knees into them to give outdoor relief when their wives would be sick, they are built of bog soil and thatched. In some cases settled on top instead of thatched."

The houses thus described appear to have been built by the occupiers themselves, who are bog labourers, and who, notwithstanding their wretched surroundings, are reported to enjoy excellent general health, owing no doubt to the active outdoor life they lead.

The following, situated in the electoral division of Kilsnagat north, may be taken as fairly typical illustrations of these houses:—

No. 1. Joseph Waddy, Allwood, one apartment, 10 feet by 8, mud walls, half thatched roof; three adult persons and one child; about one acre of reclaimed bog, rent about 12s.

No. 2. John Wyas, one apartment, 12 feet by 10, mud walls, with thatched roof, father, mother, and six children; with about three acres; rent 11s. 10s.

No. 3. Patrick Beland, two apartments, 8 feet by 10, bog soil walls, thatched roof; father, mother, and five children; half acre of reclaimed bog, rent 10s.

No. 4. John Lewis, two apartments, 10 feet by 8, bog soil walls, bog soil roof; accommodate seven adult persons and two children; about half an acre of bog land; rent 7s. 6d.

In the town of Kilsnagat, in the south of the union, some of the houses having been represented to me as very bad, I visited a few typical ones of this class in company with the constabulary sergeant, and I here submit the particulars as entered in my note book of two very miserable examples that came under my own observation:—

No. 1. Patrick Donk, with wife and eight children, total in family 16; one room, bad and smoky; one about 14 by 9, and about 10 or 11 feet in height, 2 beds, no garden; pays 6s. a week. Has constant employment at 12s. a week; has a goat and some fowl, no pig.

No. 2. John Kavanagh, seven in family, one room, about same size as in No. 1, bad and smoky, two beds, no garden; rent 6s. a week, no goat, fowl, or pig; is not regularly employed; at present time earns 3s. 6d. to 4s. a day; average about 10s. or 7s. with fowl per week; is idle for four months of the year."

One more quotation will suffice as to this. The medical officer of the Kilsnagat dispensary district deposes:—

"There are more than 100 agricultural labourers in my district, and there are 9 or 10 of the union cottages. The others, except those on the landlord's property, are bad as a rule, some are in villages and some on the farms of the employers, they generally pay 1s. 6d. a week, and very few have gardens."

"The labourers' cottages (union) have been a great boon, and there is still a need of more."

The labourers' houses, when not situated on the employer's land, are usually held under the immediate owner, and for the most part by weekly tenure and at a great variety of rents.

42. Only two further points coming under this head appear to call for special notice here, namely, those connected with the drainage and the supply of the several districts.

In the town of Kilsnagat, population 1,172, the board of guardians in 1867 provided an adequate water supply for the inhabitants, at an outlay of 2,122. But in the more important centre of population of Naas, with its 3,735 inhabitants, no practical step has been as yet taken to meet the urgent demand that there exists not only for a better supply of pure water, now obtained from several ponds in the town, but also for a properly constructed drainage system.

I find on inquiry as to this, that so far back as the year 1860 plans were prepared by Mr. Nichol, a London sanitary engineer, for improving the sewers of the town, at a roughly estimated cost of 1 understood somewhere about 8,000, or 9,000, but the Local Government Board

was unable to approve of this scheme, owing to the absence of any sufficient provision for flushing purposes.

Since then nothing further has, I believe, been done in this matter.

As regards the water supply, I am informed that it has been suggested by the town commissioners that it should be brought from the Tipper Springs, some two miles distant, but that the guardians are not favourably disposed towards that project, owing to the cost it would entail on some of the rural districts having no immediate interest in, or benefit to derive from it.

It has been, I believe, suggested, as an alternative to this proposal, that new and better pumps should be sunk in the town, which would appear to be, at best, but a very inadequate and unsatisfactory mode of dealing with so serious a question.

The medical officer of Naas district deposes as to this:—

"I would say that a proper water supply is just now the most urgent want we have. There was a drainage scheme proposed which the Local Government Board rejected on the ground of want of flushing power, but the water supply should have taken precedence of the drainage. It was getting the car before the horse to reverse this order of proceeding."

The following quotation from the replies furnished to me by a resident proprietor and active ex-officio guardian of Naas Union will bring to a close the observations under this head I have felt necessary to make; he says:—

"At the present moment the town of Naas is in a disgraceful state owing to want of water and want of a system of main drainage. The latter has been for many years before the public, and although all good law guardians, town commissioners, and medical officers have rendered to adopt a dry-earth system, these efforts cannot be continued owing to the opposition of about seven householders, who point on running water-works sewerage into town drains, which cannot be made suitable for the reception of such matter."

V.—GARDEN ALLOTMENTS.

43. As already explained in paragraph 39, there is half an acre of land provided in connection with each of the 128 cottages erected by the board of guardians under the Labourers' Acts.

So far as it has come under my notice these plots have been generally supplied with potatoes and cabbages for the use of the occupiers, or sometimes with oats.

All these cottages have been located in the rural districts of the union, none so far in the towns; and no allotments have been made in any instance under section 16 of 48 & 49 Vict. c. 77, and section 12 of 49 & 50 Vict. c. 38.

44. As has been explained, however, labourers frequently claim, for the reason, from neighbouring farmers, or obtain merely by the measure they are able to put into the soil, a small plot of coarse ground, to plant a crop of potatoes in, and which is, to those who claim it, a very great boon and assistance in every way. The size depends entirely on the quantity of manure available in each case, and the accommodation is only given for the one crop, the farmer providing all the horse manure, and the labourer the seed and manure and weeding the potatoes, &c.

45. There are no cow runs or cow gates, but farmers in this union frequently take in gossies from 1st May to 31st October, being paid at from 5s. to 4s. 10s., and even 2s. for the accommodation, and I am informed that even well-to-do labourers, in some cases, avail themselves of this, and, in that way, add considerably to their ordinary income; but this resource must be obviously, I should say, quite out of the reach of the general body of that class, and limited in practice to only a very few of them.

46. There are no bees kept by any class of labourers in this union, but they quite commonly are found to have pigs, goats, and poultry, &c., which here, as elsewhere, contribute very materially, it cannot be doubted, to help them over their seasons when labour is scarce, and the difficulty of living is, in consequence, experienced in its acutest form.

VI.—BENEFIT SOCIETIES.

47. There are no societies of this kind to be met with in any part of this union.

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VII.—TRADE UNIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

48. There are no trade unions of agricultural labourers, but in Naas there is an organisation known as "The Labour League." It does not appear to exist, at the present time at any rate, in any very active or peaceful form, so far as I could see, and I was informed that it is of late rather declining than otherwise. The secretary of it, however, appeared before me, as described in paragraph 28, and gave his evidence, I must say, in a sensible, moderate, and becoming manner.

VIII.—GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES.

49. All the information that has reached me on this subject is to the effect that, upon the whole, good feeling prevails between the labourers and their employers, of whatever class, throughout the Naas Union, and my own personal observation and experience lead entirely to confirm this view.

The satisfactory state of things may, I am disposed to infer, be attributed, in a considerable degree, to the fact that, as previously stated, the union had the good fortune to possess an exceptionally large class of tenant gentry, who are fully able to place responsibilities and duties, and who discharge them in a creditable and considerate manner, so far as the facts have come under my notice.

IX.—THE GENERAL CONDITIONS OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

50. The facts stated under each head of the inquiry just dealt with will probably indicate, with sufficient clearness, what the average condition is of the general body of the class of agricultural labourers resident in the different districts of this large and important union.

51. I may, however, in addition be allowed to quote here some observations on the general aspects of the question, which are contained in two of the replies to inquiries furnished to me.

The first is from a resident landlord and deputy lieutenant of the county Kildare who, though not belonging to his constituency, was, I may mention, specially named to me by the Roman Catholic clergyman of his parish as a reliable person to consult for the purposes of my inquiry, on the "uproot ground" of "the honest and intelligent labourer" he was sure he took to be the subject of it.

This gentleman writes—

"The general condition of the agricultural labourer is a deplorable one.

"The large majority of the better educated young men wisely emigrate, the remainder by early marriage and large families are from the commencement of their careers precluded from all possibility of raising themselves in the world.

"The old fashioned perk which compelled the children to keep their parents off the jobs is nearly extinct, as can be seen by the outside relief lists.

"Nothing short of a state-aided compulsory old age insurance Act could help them.

"I think the extension of the Lakeside Acts would be the best way to remove to benefit the ordinary labourer, but these should be more superintendence exercised by the Local Government Board in the selection of tenants, and the rents paid by them.

"I think the labourers in this area are worse housed than those in the country. Many of their dwellings are entirely unfit for human habitation, badly constructed, over-crowded, and without privacy."

The second reply referred to comes from another local proprietor, who is well known as an improving landlord, who affords much local employment, and is justly regarded as being, in all respects, a most useful member of the class of resident gentry; he says as to this—

"Generally I should say that the condition of the agricultural labourer in this neighbourhood depends entirely on himself. If he is a good labourer, steady and sober, he is valued and can command seasonal employment at 2s. a day. The labourers living in towns are lazy and indolent. I constantly see them hanging about the corners in Naas when wages are 3s. 6d. and 4s. a day. Then in winter they starve and relief works have to be started to help them."

52. The industries pursued in this area beyond what has been described are few, but, at the same time, not devoid of some importance.

There were two factories, worked by water power, for the manufacture of ironed and frayed, situated respectively near the towns of Clane and Ballynascant.

The former, however, was last year destroyed by fire, and has not been revived.

The latter is still in operation, but apparently on a very small scale, as it does not, I am informed, at present employ more than about 20 hands altogether.

The principal industry to be noted is that connected with the cutting, mowing, and sale of turf, carried on, in the north-western section of the union, in the six electoral divisions through which the well known and wide reaching Bog of Allen runs.

In these electoral divisions it is estimated that about 400 or 500 households of families live chiefly by the industry.

They rent the bog from the landlord at from 5s. to 7s. the perch, according to quality, from March to July they are fully occupied in the cutting and saving of the turf, and are then free to accept harvest employment.

During the winter months they live by the sale of the turf, either in Dublin or the surrounding towns.

It is estimated that a perch of bog would yield as a return 5l. or 6l., and the number of perches rented varies usually from 5 to 15, according to size of families.

In some cases farmers who live on the uplands buy a turf bank, and employ bog men to cut it, paying them about 2s. 6d. a day for the work.

A good many live on the bog itself, where they build houses for themselves, and maintain small patches, varying in extent, of the bog, when the turf has been cut away, paying at the rate of 10s. to 12s. an acre at first, and afterwards perhaps 1s. Others live near the bog.

Though their houses are very wretched, it is stated that the bachelors conform, as a rule, to make a fairly good living out of their occupation, and notwithstanding their unimproved and cheerless surroundings, they are deemed to be as happy upon the whole as a healthy, and contented man, though of a rather rough type of humanity.

The only industry remaining to be described is that connected with the working of the granite quarries, which are situated on the slopes of the Wicklow mountains, in the Lanes electoral division, upon the property of the Marquis of Waterford.

These quarries are of considerable value, and employ a large amount of labour, chiefly skilled, in the locality.

They are at the present time rented from the landlord by five different lessees, and the total number of men engaged on the works is, as reported to me, 144, viz.—

Stonecutters	-	-	100
Quarrymen	-	-	30
Carters	-	-	10
Blacksmiths	-	-	4
Total	-	-	144

The rate of wages allowed to these several classes is as follows:—

Stonecutters, 26s. per week in summer and 24s. in winter	
Quarrymen, 22s. in summer and 20s. in winter	
Men in charge of horses, 2s., 14s. in summer and 12s. in winter	

53. The ownership of property is considerably divided in Naas Union, and is in a large degree, though by no means exclusively, vested in the class of resident gentry, already referred to in the course of this report as comprising, in several ways, many substantial advantages on the existing population of their respective districts.

54. The labourers are, primarily, as the whole, fairly enough distributed in this union. The majority are, however, naturally to be found located in the various towns and villages, and there are, I think, no doubt that in the towns of Naas they are a good deal in excess of the local demands for them, except during particular seasons.

55. The size of the farms has been described in paragraph 18, and with respect to this the observation made in paragraph 41 of my Keshurst report may be here almost verbatim repeated, viz.—That on all, large and small alike, the employment of labour is now everywhere restricted within the narrowest practicable limits, the work on the case of the smallest class being chiefly performed by the farmers themselves, and their immediate families.

56. The ordinary earnings of the labourer have been detailed in paragraph 34, and are no doubt a good deal in advance of what could have been commanded ten or fifteen years ago.

It is, I think, equally certain that as a rule they now live much better than formerly, when in regular employment.

The
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Labourers
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They have generally speaking three dairy meals, though in some instances it has been stated they only have two regular meals, the middle meal taking in such cases either the form of a light luncheon. Bread and tea, bread and milk, and potatoes constitute the principal elements in their ordinary diet; but they also, it is stated, own, in addition to these, habitually use a considerable quantity of American pork, purchased at from 15s. to 5d. per lb.

There is, however, no doubt that many of the labourers in this union of the better class, and receiving wages above the ordinary standard, are able to live much better than this, unless when their families happen to be, as is so often the case, unusually large.

57 I annex hereto, marked A., a return showing the contract prices of the several articles in use in the Nass workhouse now, and at the corresponding date of 1890, and though the result is not here as marked as in other cases already dealt with by me, the change is still in favour of the consumer, and is indicative of an improvement, to a certain extent, of his position in regard to this.

58 The nature and extent of the land cultivation at the present time is vague throughout the several districts of the union have been already fully described in the course of this report, and it is here only necessary to give in relation to it one quotation as an illustration of the view urged by the working farmers, generally, as to the remedy for the existing state of things proposed by them. A tellingly large farmer in the neighbourhood of Nass says:—

"I am certain that if the farmers became the purchasers of their own farms it would lead to great improvements and an increase of work for the labourers. No such purchases have taken place in this district."

X.—CONCLUSIONS.

59, I have now brought to a close the third report it has been my duty to submit for the consideration of the Royal Commission on the general points referred to me for investigation.

The reasons thus reported on may, I think, be regarded as being on the whole fairly typical of each of the three distinct classes into which the Irish Poor Law Unions may be conveniently divided.

Keshmarr is fairly representative of the poorest and most congested class, Kanturk of the class intermediate between that and the most favourably circumstanced districts, and Nass, probably, as this a specimen as could be selected of the latter.

While most widely differing in these general circumstances, these three unions, it will have been seen, present almost a common aspect in regard to the problem of the agricultural labourers' employment, the want of continuous work throughout the year being, in all alike, represented to be the principal grievance of which they have at present to complain.

Coupled with this complaint there is, here too, on the part of the farmers, the same acknowledgment that has been experienced elsewhere of the justice of the labourers' complaint, and the same plea is urged as to their inability to do anything to remedy it under existing conditions as to the prices of produce and the cost of labour, until they are enabled to become the owners of their land by purchase, to be effected on terms more favourable to them than those to which they are at present subject in the form of rent payable to their respective landlords.

As in the case of Kanturk Union, the want of more and better home accommodation has, it has been seen, been very strongly urged here also, and, as in the case of Kanturk, I desire to observe here too that the contention in favour of this is, in my judgment, a perfectly just and reasonable one.

In this petition, however, the Legislature has already vested Irish local authorities with the fullest powers and facilities for dealing with all such questions, and judging both from what the Nass Board of Guardians have already done in this connection, and from the very decided views now expressed with respect to it, by the chairman and other influential members of that body, little doubt need, I apprehend, be entertained as to their readiness to continue and largely extend their useful operations in the same direction, if properly approached upon the subject.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

W. F. O'BRIEN,

(Assistant Commissioner)

A.

NASS UNION.

BARRAGE OF CONTRACT PRICES OF PRINCIPAL ARTICLES OF WORKHOUSE CONSUMPTION FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 25 MARCH 1892 AND 25 MARCH 1890.

	March 1892.	March 1890.
White bread - - - - - per cwt.	4 4 4	4 5 4
Oatmeal - - - - - do do	10 0 0	14 10 0
Indian meal - - - - - do do	1 12 6	7 10 0
Rice - - - - - do do	0 2 4	0 1 0
New milk - - - - - gallon	0 8 0	0 0 7½
Butter - - - - - do do	8 0 0	0 0 10
Eggs - - - - - do do	8 1 0	0 8 10
Beef - - - - - do do	8 0 0	0 0 0
Pork - - - - - do do	8 0 1	0 1 10
Salt water - - - - - do do	8 0 0	0 0 0
Whiskey - - - - - gallon	10 11	0 10 0
Marmalade - - - - - do do	0 7 0	0 0 0
Green soap - - - - - cwt.	1 7 0	1 0 0
Paraffin wax candles - - - - - lb.	0 0 0	0 0 0
Coal Whitehaven - - - - - ton	0 10 0	0 14 0
Flour - - - - - cwt.	0 10 0	0 10 0
Soap - - - - - cwt.	0 0 10	0 0 0
Gray cotton - - - - - per yard	0 0 0	0 0 0
Flannel - - - - - do do	0 1 0	0 1 0
Cheek - - - - - do do	0 0 10	0 0 0
Tricose - - - - - do do	0 0 0	0 0 0
Corbans - - - - - do do	0 0 0	0 0 0
Men's shoes - - - - - pair	0 0 0	0 0 0
Women's shoes - - - - - do do	0 0 0	0 0 0
Children's boots - - - - - do do	0 0 0	0 0 0
Port, single X Guinness - - - - - barrel	1 7 0	1 0 0
General average cost per head, weekly	0 0 10	0 0 10

(Signed) Wm. FARRALL,
Acting Clerk of Union.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

I R E L A N D.

R E P O R T

BY

MR. W. P. O'BRIEN, C.B.
(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER).

UPON THE

POOR LAW UNION OF ENNISTYMON,
(CO. CLARE).

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THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

To GEORGE DUNN, Esq., Secretary,
Royal Commission on Labour.

Monkstown, Co. Dublin,
October 27, 1882.

Sir,

I have the honour to report, for the information of the Royal Commissioners on Labour, that I arrived at Kinslayman on the 4th instant for the purpose of proceeding with my inquiry into the condition of the agricultural labourers in that union, the result of which I now beg to submit, following in doing so the same order of reference to the different subjects dealt with that was observed by me in my previous reports.

2. I have again to acknowledge the valuable assistance and willing co-operation extended to me in every quarter, without exception, in which I had occasion to ask for information.

3. During my sojourn of nearly three weeks there I visited all the principal districts and centres of population in the union, and have had, in regard to each of them, the advantage of extended communication, either personally or by correspondence, with the best representatives of the different classes and interests concerned that were accessible to me.

4. To the officers and men of the Royal Irish Constabulary I have been here as elsewhere much indebted for the important help I have received from them, and the same observation applies to the various county and union officials to whom I had occasion to refer, notably the county surveyor and the clerk of the union.

5. In accordance with my invariable practice in this respect, I attended the first meeting of the Board of Guardians that took place after my arrival in the union, and experienced at the hands of the chairmen, the vice-chairmen, and other influential members of that body the utmost courtesy and desire to facilitate my proceedings in every way in their power.

6. As in my previous reports, I desire to offer here, in the first instance, some preliminary observations explanatory of the general condition of the union under review.

7. The union of Kinslayman, situated on the west coast of the county Clare, is partly inland and in part maritime, and is divided for the purposes of poor law administration into 20 separate electoral divisions.

The poor law valuation of the entire is 26,688^l, the area of comprehends 19,243 acres, of which about 5 per cent. may be classed as waste, &c., and the present population is 24,108, as against 25,380 and 24,760, the census returns for 1871 and 1881 respectively, thus being equivalent to a reduction in the former case of 5,267, or 18.6 per cent., and in the latter of 6,672, or 11.4 per cent. of the previous population.

No part of this union has been adjudged as a congested area under s. 1, sec. 24, of 54 & 55 Vict. c. 45.

The total number of rated holdings in the union is 4,483, which is equivalent to an average of 22 acres in extent, and a valuation of 6^l. 5s. for each holding.

The valuations of the entire union being divided into the area and population, give for the latter an average of 23^l. 6s. per head, and for the former an average of 7s. 6d. per acre, all waste, bog, and moorland, &c. being of course included in the estimate.

8. The diversities of soil encountered in different sections of the union are very considerable.

In the northern divisions the land is, in great part, suited to none in any part of Ireland for grazing purposes, while in the electoral divisions situated in the south-eastern portion the general quality of the soil may be pronounced to be of a very inferior and indifferent character.

Even in the most favoured districts, however, and of a very poor description is frequently met in immediate combination with excellent land, but the following particulars will best illustrate the great disparity that exists in the ratio of valuation to area in the electoral divisions, considered as a whole, in different sections of the union.

Outlying, as being special and exceptional cases, the two electoral divisions containing the towns of Kinslayman and Milken Malbay, which give respectively a valuation of 13s. 10d. and 13s. 6d. to the acre, the following figures will sufficiently illustrate the extent of the diversity just adverted to in the case of the rural electoral divisions, viz:—

No. 1. Northern Section.

Electoral Division.	Average.	Valuation	Valuation per Acre.
Killmore	6,400	4,320	5 4
Killbuck	5,800	3,500	5 3
Ballinacorney	4,600	2,800	5 3
Ballinacorney	5,100	1,800	7 4
Total	21,900	10,420	5 3

No. 2. Southern Section.

Electoral Division.	Average.	Valuation	Valuation per Acre.
Finscally	1,800	110	5 4
Clonsilla	5,900	900	5 3
Maherscally	4,600	1,300	4 4
Ballyva	1,900	1,700	4 4
Total	24,200	4,000	3 7

9. The boundaries of the union are: north, the barony of Burren and poor law union of Ballyvaughan; east, the unions of Carrofin and Ballyvaughan; south, the union of Kinslayman; and west, the Atlantic Ocean.

10. The surface of the country is a good deal diversified; in the northern section it is undulating and hilly, rising in parts to from 500 to 1,000 feet above the sea level, and having on its extreme western border, where the coast is indented by the bays of Lonsann and Milken Malbay, the magnificent range of the "cliffs of Moher," which rise to an altitude of more than 600 feet at their highest point.

In the southern half of the union the ground is uneven, but does not rise to any considerable height, except in the electoral division of Clonsilla, in which is the maximum range of Binnocallan. Much of the surface in this section of the union is low and flat, the soil on the east side being, as already shown, of an exceptionally inferior description, while to the west it is to a large extent fertile and valuable in character.

11. As in its physical features, so also in its geological characteristics there is a great diversity observable in the different sections of the union.

The northern section is principally occupied by the coal measures, with portions of upper limestone above Kinslayman and also at Kinslayman, and limestone is again encountered in the north-west, occupying portions of Killbuck and Kinslayman.

In some places the coal measures are so thin that, as I am informed, the surface along the streams are worn down to the underlying limestone, and expose sections of the coal measures.

In the immediate vicinity of this section is situated, to the east, the well-known health resort of Lonsann, famous for the salubrity of its air and its valuable medicinal springs of chalybeate and sulphur waters, while on its western side are found extensive deposits of valuable laminated flag rock, to which it will be my duty at a later stage of this report to make special reference.

As the junctions of the geological formations just described the usual faulting effects are very marked, and on the north-west the limestone district lying low

R.—IV.
Kinslayman.

Causes of the diversity of soil in different electoral divisions.

Boundaries of union.

Physical features.

Geological formations.

Limestone.

Flag rock.

26-IV.
Kensington.
H.M.

along the coast, is very fertile, and being sand to be little affected by frost or snow in winter, is regarded as being peculiarly valuable.

In the southern section of the union no limestone exists; it is for the most part occupied by the coal measures, with some not very considerable admixture of bog and alluvium, and a range of blown sands near the village of Lahinch, a small bathing resort situated on the bay of Lahinch.

12. The size of the farms varies greatly in this union.

On the average they do not exceed an area of from 15 to 30 acres and a valuation of 81, to 201, some more and some less, but in the electoral division of Killybegs in the north-east, Clonsilla, Lariga, and Killybegs in the extreme north, and Annagh and Ballyvaughan in the south-west, there are some very large grazing farms, 300, to 400 acres, more than one of these being, in certain cases, held by the same person, and some are in the hands of, and farmed by the owner of the soil.

13. The statistics of the farms' hire, to which I have in other cases referred, may be here too conveniently used to illustrate in a concise form the general state of the facts as to this.

The qualification of a special juror in the county Clare is a valuation of 5001, and the number returned as qualified to serve under this bond is 27.

The qualification of a common juror in a valuation of 401 is the county, 101 in towns, a household interest of 201 or a freehold of 301, and under these several heads the number is 220, thus making the total number qualified to act in either capacity 247, which, I may observe, is a good deal less than one-third of the number given in paragraph 14 of my report on Kantek as being actually qualified in that union.

14. In each of the three unions hitherto dealt with by me it has been my duty to indicate, on bearing on the condition of the agricultural labourer, the great decline in the extent of tillage-farming that has been everywhere steadily and progressively taking place in recent times, under the combined operation of three specific causes, viz:—

1. The great fall that has taken place in the market value of agricultural produce of every description;
2. The large advance that has been now almost universally conceded in the wages of labourers; and
3. The great uncertainty and the generally unfavourable character of the seasons with which farmers have become furnished in late years.

To this rate the Keshmystown Union presents no exception, the tillage-farming pursued in every part of it, at the present time, being reduced to almost a minimum, and being strictly limited to the production of such crops as potatoes and green crops, with, in certain districts, a little oats, as the exigencies of the farmers themselves render absolutely necessary.

It has been seen that in the unions of Keshmystown and Kantek tillage has been replaced almost exclusively by dairy farming, and in some by the rearing and fattening of dry stock, there being in that district literally no dairy farming of any sort.

In the Keshmystown Union, however, a residue of both these systems is to be noted, the distinctive characteristic being that on the very large farms, to which reference has been made, the land is almost entirely devoted to the rearing and fattening of sheep and cattle, dairy farming being now almost universally avoided in these cases, while on the small holdings, on the contrary, the production of butter may be said to be, in addition to the rearing of calves, the purpose to which the farmers of this class are now mainly and almost exclusively directing their attention.

15. A few quotations from the evidence given in confirmation of what has been just stated will probably suffice on the present occasion.

A poor law guardian, living near Keshmystown, and farming about 50 acres, says:—

"I have only about 3 acres of tillage, potatoes and turnips, for my own use."

"I only make better and feed calves."

"There was a great deal more tillage formerly, only a little potatoes and turnips now, very little oats. The tillage was reduced because it was not able to pay the labour. You could get cheaper than you could produce what you wanted."

An experienced and intelligent witness, who acts as land steward to the principal local estate owner at Keshmystown, says on the same subject:—

"The farms about here are only average about 50 acres. Only 3 or 4 acres of tillage, it is reducing, and will

reduce still further, owing to cost of labour, low prices and climate. Tillage consists of potatoes, with some oats, and green crops."

"The farming is principally cattle, but there are a good many sheep, for which the land is good. The cattle farming is dairy farming. No fattening of cattle here (i.e., about the town of Keshmystown), but there is about the Barren country, and in some other districts where the farms are large."

A neighbouring and extensive farmer living in the vicinity of Miltown Malby, in the south-western part of the union, deposes as follows:—

"I farm about 1,200 statute acres, no dairy farming, all sheep and cattle. I have about 10 acres of tillage. Just what I want for myself; in fact, I have to buy oats."

One more quotation will, I think, suffice as to this.

A professional gentleman, living in the neighbourhood of Lahinch, where he also farms on a tolerably extensive scale, and where he has been much distinguished for his practical efforts to promote food industries, says:—

"I live near Lahinch, in Ballytear electoral division. I farm about 100 acres, paying 1501 rent. My farming is chiefly grazing—fattening—no dairy farming, only about 1 acre of tillage, potatoes and turnips. Tillage does not pay. I also keep about 100 sheep."

It would be easy from my notes to multiply unimpeachable testimony to the same effect, but it has, I think, been already made abundantly clear that in this union, as well as in the three previously treated by me, there is on all sides a remarkable consensus of local opinion both as to the fact of the gradual and progressive decline in tillage farming now taking place throughout the country, and as to the particular causes that have contributed to bring about this result.

16. The union of Keshmystown is chiefly situated in the barony of Ceroconroe, but also partly in the baronies of Barren, Ulickin, and Inaghin, and I find that, without including special assessments appertaining only to particular townlands, the poundage of the two last half-yearly levies of county rate was in the barony named as follows, viz:—

	a.	d.
Barren	2	2
Ceroconroe	8	2
Ulickin	3	9
Inaghin	2	10

In addition to this it is to be considered the poor rate for the current year, which amounts to 3d and ranges from a minimum of 1s. 3d in Ballytear to 3s. 10d and 4s. 3d respectively in the town divisions of Keshmystown and Miltown Malby.

A loan of 2,5001 for the supply of potato seed was obtained from Government in 1891, of which one moiety has been repaid, and the other will become payable on the 1st of August 1892, when the amount, 1,2501, will have to be added to the public burdens affecting each individual ratepayer as income in 1891 potatoes in the advance.

17. The fiscal liabilities detailed in the preceding paragraph, though not as heavy as in some other places, must, I think, be regarded as constituting at the present juncture no slight addition to the difficulties with which the general body of the farming classes are undoubtedly just now confronted.

It may probably be the case that the class of large farmers, who have been already referred to, are in a position of sufficient independence to enable them to meet, without suffering anything worse than a some inconvenience, the consequences of the adversely low level to which the prices of stock have now fallen in this country, but to the vastly more numerous class of small farmers, with whose fortunes those of the agricultural labourers are so closely bound up, the effect must, it is feared, prove far more serious.

So far as I have been able to gather, from the best and most impartial sources of information accessible to me, the present condition of these latter classes is rather mixed.

About one-fourth of them are represented to me as being upon the whole fairly safe and solvent, but the majority, representing not improbably three-fourths of the entire class, are said to be in a struggling and more or less embarrassed condition, very many of them being, it is stated, heavily in debt to the local shopkeepers and others.

Their general position, though grave enough, is not, however, I should be disposed to infer, as all as unfavour-

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER.

Financial
condition.

County rate.

Town rate.

Seed Supply
Act.

General ex-
penditure of
the union.

The large
farmers.

The small
farmers.

R.-IV.
Barnstaple.
H.M.
Agriculture.
Occupation.

which is paid for at a much higher figure) is, as has been said, I am informed, allowed to the labourers imported for this branch of the work from England.

35. The estimated annual earnings of the several classes of labourers when regularly employed may be stated to be as follows:—

Ordinary labourers	£	2
Skilled	£	32
Men in charge of horses	£	34
Gardners and shepherds	£	30 to 50L.

The annual earnings of labourers—and there are many—who are only seasonally and intermittently employed it would not be possible to state with any approach to accuracy.

The only additional resources to be noted as being open to labourers are:—(1) The plots of one acre, or as it is here termed "muck" ground, they are able to obtain in many, though not in all cases, for a crop of potatoes, paying for the accommodation at the rate of 4s. to 5s. per acre; (2) To a great extent their wives feed pigs and fowl, and sometimes add to their earnings by washing or other similar work; and (3) The children of labourers who have either gone into service in the country, or have emigrated to America, frequently assist their families more or less substantially towards out of their wages.

IV.—COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.

36. The Board of Guardians of Barnstaple Union have erected, under the provisions of the Labourers' Act, 25 union cottages, of which 25 are already occupied at a rate of 1s. per week, and one is not quite finished.

I have taken occasion to visit as many of them as were accessible to me.

They each consist of a kitchen 15'6" by 12, two bedrooms 8' x 10 and 10' x 7 respectively, with a left enchequer over both bedrooms. There is one out-house for sanitary purposes, but no pigsty, and to each is attached half-an-acre of ground.

The cost was from 1877 to 1886, but, including the purchase of the land, it is estimated that the total cost will average about 150L. per cottage, which is, I think, quite high enough.

The guardians appear to have proceeded in this matter very gradually and with a good deal of caution, and very properly so, I consider, having regard to the existing financial burdens of the ratepayers, the great decrease that has taken and is still taking place in the number of labourers, and the very general absence of any demand for their labour in the rural districts.

But conceding all this, and while it is manifest that no such extensive want of this accommodation is experienced here as I have had occasion to observe upon in dealing with other cases, it would, I think, be very much to be regretted if the local authorities were to stop short at the stage as yet reached by them in their administration of these most necessary and valuable accommodations.

The labourers that remain in the union may be now said to be for the most part concentrated in the towns and villages, of which the principal are Barnstaple, Milborne Maish, Looe, Looe, and Looe, and in each of which I took occasion, when visiting these localities, to make a personal inspection of several of the houses.

37. In the town of Barnstaple there are only about 25 labourers all told, no permanent resident, and though some of these are fairly housed, others not, I can personally testify, very indifferently circumstanced in this respect.

There are in the town two ranges of working men's cottages, to the number of 30 to 40, erected, I learn, some 30 years since by the owner of the property. They are of an excellent description, except that they have no yards or gardens attached to them, but they are only to a very limited extent in the occupation of local agricultural labourers, being chiefly let to tradesmen, landowners, and petty dealers, &c.

Several labourers to the district attended before me to represent their want of and desire for "union cottages" with some land attached, and an encasement I found, as I have already observed, more of their present houses to be of a very indifferent character and entirely unprovided with yard or garden accommodation.

38. In Milborne Maish, however, the most populous town in the union, the want of improved house accommodation is much more marked in every way.

The relieving officer of the district states as to this:—

"I would say there are between 50 and 60 labourers in the town of Milborne Maish. As a rule the labourers are very badly circumstanced both in the town and rural districts as to houses. In the town they are generally huddled, in bad regular, with no gardens, and the rents are generally 1s., 1s. 3d., and 1s. 6d. a week."

The medical officer of the dispensary deposes:—

"There are about six or eight union cottages in my district. As a rule the (labourers') houses are bad, some have only one room, and some a kitchen and room. They are in many cases unfit to live in. Some have no garden, and others only very small patches. I think there is a decided want of more union cottages. Near the town would, I think, be the most convenient situation for them."

To this may be added the testimony of the Reverend J. B. Kingston, parish priest, who says as to this:—

"As for the accommodation of the labourers it is not at all sufficient, the houses—I cannot call them houses—are too small and confined, and must be unsanitary."

Several of the labourers themselves appeared before me, and gave evidence in the same effect, and having subsequently, accompanied by the relieving officer, visited a considerable number of the houses, I am bound to say that the descriptions given of them, as already quoted, did not appear to me to be at all an exaggerated one.

39. The worst houses, however, that came under my notice were seen by me at the village of Looe. Near the quay of that village are two ranges of hovels almost, if not entirely, occupied by the local labourers, which I can only describe as being in every respect absolutely unfit for human beings to live in.

40. While the house accommodation of the labourers in this union is undoubtedly such in great part as to call, in my opinion, for remedy in the shape of a further application of the Labourers' Act, it is right to add that a very large proportion of the class of small farmers are not at all more favourably circumstanced in this respect, but as to how far this may be owing to strained circumstances on their parts, or how far it is the result of simple indifference to physical comfort on their part, I am not in a position to pronounce.

41. In connection with this all-important subject of the housing of the labouring classes I desire to say here—speaking not with reference to this union, in particular, but generally—that in many instances where I have had an opportunity of learning the views of the labourers, I have found a wide and deeply-rooted feeling to prevail amongst them to the effect that the selection of sites for the cottages, of structures to build them, and of labourers to occupy them, has not been properly conducted, and that the decision arrived at on these points has been, for the most part, governed by private influences, and other equally objectionable considerations.

Having had no means of personally testing the justice of these complaints, I can of course offer no opinion of my own on the subject, but I willingly give a place here to statements made to me by two very competent and experienced witnesses, of whose strict impartiality in the matter no doubt need, I am sure, be entertained.

42. A magistrate of great experience as a farmer, land agent, and poor law guardian in this union says:—

"The house accommodation is improved, but the houses not built by the guardians are very bad. More union cottages would be useful if properly disposed of, and given to real labourers, which is not now the case."

Giving very fully the opinion just quoted, the second witness I have referred to offers the following important suggestion for the amendment of the Labourers' Act, viz.—

He says—"Roughly speaking, my idea is that a thorough and satisfactory provision of cottages could not have been effected through the guardians."

"My scheme is—

"1. That the Local Government Board should be empowered to appoint an official, such as a sub-commissioner, an intelligent man, with a practical knowledge of country life, whose duty it should be to prepare a complete scheme for the union."

"2. That the Local Government inspector should hold an inquiry into the scheme, which

THE
ARREAR
TOTAL
LABOURERS
The plan
to effect.

The medical
officer.

The Rev. J.
B. Kingston,
P.R.

LABOURERS.

Several of
the small
farmers.

Policy of
the Board
is to give
and give
in a different
style and
amount.

Endorse

Other
occupations.

"Back"
ground.

Two and
fourth.

Help from
children.

Union
cottage.

Two and
fourth.

Milborne
Maish.

"should have been published for at least a month before."

"3. That the guardians should appear at the inquiry as opponents or supporters of the scheme, or portions of it as they might think fit."

"4. That the Local Government Board should make such order as they may think just, on reading the evidence and the inspector's report."

"5. That guardians, owners, occupiers, or labourers, should have the right to appeal against any provision or omission from the order."

"6. That the appellate tribunal should be the Court of Appeal of the Irish Land Commission."

He adds to this the following observation:—

"The present system in practice forces the labourer to initiate the proceedings, and consequently the money and important labourer alone, it often happens, is provided with a cottage."

"Labourers in many cases say nothing lest they should irritate their employers."

He says further:—

"I would add the following suggestion to those I have already made, viz. —

"7. That the cottages should be assigned to labourers respectively by the official who prepared the scheme, subject to the approval of the Local Government Board."

These suggestions involve, of course, a rather wide and radical reform of the existing system, but I may observe that they come from a witness of altogether exceptional authority and experience in such matters, and one to whose views I am well known for the correct and practical interest he has taken in the welfare and advancement of the labouring classes in this country.

V.—GARDENS AND ALLOTMENTS.

43. As stated already, each of the 26 cottages erected by the Board of Guardians, has attached to it the usual statutory half acre of land—in some instances the occupancy was of two recent a days to admit of the land being utilised—hot, as a rule, it has been, so far as I have seen, applied, as intended, to producing potatoes and cabbages, &c., for the use of the family.

44. No houses have been erected so far, except in the rural districts, and there have been no allotments of land under the provisions of section 16 of 48 & 49 Vict. c. 77, and section 12 of 49 & 50 Vict. c. 59.

Many labourers, however, rent from the neighbouring farmer a plot of concrete potato ground, here known as "muck," which they till and manure, paying at the rate of about 4s. or 5s. per acre for the accommodation. It is stated, however, that they are not always willing to avail themselves of this, unless they can get it in the black or bog land, which is esteemed the best for the growth of potatoes.

45. The live stock kept by labourers in this union consists mainly of pigs and fowls; there are also a few goats, and occasionally a donkey.

No bees are kept.

VI.—BRIEFER SOCIETIES.

46. There are no societies of this nature in any part of Enniscorthy Union.

VII.—TRADE UNIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

47. No such organisations exist here, but it is stated that the class of labourers known as "herds" have in recent times entered into some form of combination amongst themselves which renders it now impossible for farmers to fill the places of any of them that it may have been found necessary for any reason to remove.

VIII.—GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYER.

48. The general relations between employers and employed in this union at the present time are represented as being, on the whole, fairly satisfactory.

In some cases the labourers no doubt complain of the indifference of the farmers to their wants, as regards the neglect to provide work for them in the winter time, a feeling which formerly manifested itself a good deal in this district in making a waste of recruitment and antagonism between these classes; but at the present time, I think, there is a very much clearer perception of the true causes of this on the part of the labourers.

Thus at Mallowa Malley an able Digby labourer, named John O'Connor, expressed by me, says as to this:—

"I pay 3l. for my house; no garden. I have no concern. I suppose I do not get work three days in the week throughout the year. I do labouring work for the farmers."

"During the time we have no work we live in poverty. I go in debt to the shopkeepers when I am out of work."

"The chief wants of the labourers now are better houses, with more land, and more employment."

"THE FARMERS CANNOT GIVE MORE EMPLOYMENT, AND ARE GLAD TO WORK THEMSELVES."

"I WISH EMPLOYMENT OF A PUBLIC KIND."

IX.—THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

49. Being quite convinced that either the holding of public meetings or the organisation of local committees of labourers would, in this country, be almost certain at the present time to excite their minds, and create extravagant and delusive expectations on their parts, so to what was to be accomplished, I have not, in any instance, deemed it advisable to resort to either of these courses for the purpose of acquiring the information I required; but I made instead such arrangements as seemed, at each centre of population visited by me, an adequate expression of the feelings and wants of the labourer, and I may add that there is no class in the community interested in the question under consideration of whose views I have not endeavored to obtain an equally full and adequate representation.

50. It has been already shown in the course of this report in what manner the occupation of the land in this union is at present distributed, as between the large and small farmers, and the specific purposes to which it is now devoted by these two classes respectively.

It has been seen that by both classes alike things farming has everywhere, under the pressure of existing conditions, been almost entirely abandoned, as a rule, the labour required on the large farms being, except during hay and harvest times, confined to that of herds and resident farm servants, and in the smaller and widely more numerous class being provided for altogether by the occupier and his family, supplemented during special seasons by the help of small farmers mutually lent each other at such periods.

Under these circumstances it is clear that the ordinary agricultural labourers still remaining in the union are now practically, as a rule, dependent, except in those limited cases where special industries exist, for the means of living on such casual and intermittent employment as they obtain in the spring, haytime, and harvest, and such odd jobs as they can obtain at other periods in breaking stones for the road contractors, or in working on such lands as are usually held by shopkeepers and others in the immediate vicinity of the towns, in which the great majority of the labouring class may be said to be now concentrated.

51. The only class they are known to possess to these very limited resources are, as already referred to in paragraph 25 viz. — (1) the pigs and fowls reared by their wives and daughters who likewise sometimes materially help the family by means of other industries, such as washing or some similar work; (2) the assistance they frequently get from children who are either in service in this country or who have emigrated to America, and (3) the plots of "muck" rented by them from the farmers.

52. In view of this state of affairs, it is manifest that it is a matter of much practical interest and importance to ascertain what industries, extraneous to the cultivation of land, either now exist or are likely to arise in the future in any part of the union.

The first industry to be noted is the factory established some 30 years ago, by a local trader, in the immediate vicinity of Enniscorthy, for the manufacture of blue cloth and flannel cloth, &c.

It is worked by water-power, but steam has, when the river is low, to be used as an auxiliary.

At one time I learn the operations connected with it were conducted on a tolerably extensive scale, as many as 30 permanent hands being employed, but there has been, in recent years, a serious decline in this respect, not more than 6 or 7 in seasons of time, and probably 10 to 12 in winter being now engaged.

In the summer months the work appears to be confined to cleaning and carding wool for the use of the farmers' wives, who afterwards make it into flannel for home use. About 20 stone per day, washed for at the rate of 2s. a stone, are now that treated; formerly the quantity is said to have been fully double this.

R.—THE
ENNISCORTHY
UNION.
Evidence of
labourers.

Public meetings
and local com-
mittees.

Arrangements made.

Result of the
at Enniscorthy.

Abandonment
of tillage.

Not one of
employed by
farmers.

Employment
of labourers
in other
industries.

Assistance
from
pigs and
fowls.

Working,
the
assistance
from children.

Mode of
planting
potatoes.

Woolen
factory.

Former
spinning
mill.

Wool
carding.

B.-IV.
ECONOMY-
BOOK.

In winter blankets and flannels, to the value of perhaps about 1,000*l.* to 1,500*l.* a year, are manufactured and sold, chiefly now in the town; formerly frize was also made.

I visited this mill and saw the proprietor, from whom I learnt that the cause of the decline in the extent of his operations was that, as soon as he had treated the bleeds to be of any use, they immediately emigrated, and that it would not pay him to import labour unless he was able to enlarge the concern to an extent that the limited water-power available would not admit of, a result I think much to be deplored.

Collection of
seaweed and
mosses for
help.

53. At the different points along the coast there is a somewhat considerable industry to be noted in regard to the collection of seaweed, used both as manure on the farms, and also for the manufacture of kelp, which is very profitable.

This occupation is shared in by small farmers, fisher men, and such labourers as are resident near the shore, but the latter are much the smallest class engaged in this pursuit.

Kelp.

When at Luncannet I was informed that these cargoes of kelp, which would represent nearly 2,500*l.* in value, had been this season despatched from there, having been sold to the North British Chemical Company of Scotland, who keep a local agent at the spot.

I understood, however, that the labourers engaged in this pursuit find it valuable and somewhat precarious, for though in favourable weather, and with a good supply of seaweed, they may easily earn 2*s.* or 3*s.* a day, they sometimes, under other conditions, lose a great deal of it, as already stated, and then their time is practically wasted.

Fishing
industry.

54. As already referred to in paragraph 21, there are in the union from about 50 to 60 fishermen, principally at Luncannet and Rosneath, who also collect seaweed, but confine their agricultural work to tilling their potato ground, where they have it.

Their canvas-covered canoes are represented to be quite unfit for going out to sea in favourable weather, and they are further said to be seriously deficient in proper fishing gear, and are generally in want of instruction in their craft.

Notwithstanding these defects they sometimes have large and valuable takes of fish, of which there is a great variety to be got on the coast, consisting, as I am informed, of mackerel, cod, haddock, turbot, &c., which they are able to dispose of to advantage at Luncannet and Rosneath.

They are said to be a very improvident and reckless class, however, and to immediately dissipate in occasional the earnings obtained in this way.

With a view to effecting some improvement in the rising generation a local gentleman recently suggested for the admission of 20 of their boys to the Rosneath Parochial School, but the parents refused to part with them for the purpose, notwithstanding the deplorable condition of their domestic surroundings, as described by me in paragraph 21.

Flag
industry.

55. The next local industry to be here noted is the flag industry, which is, in great part, of comparatively recent growth.

I deem it right to take the present occasion to give special prominence here to this subject, of which little is, I apprehend, generally known, as the industry appears to me to be one not only of much importance at the present time, but also to be susceptible of very considerable development and expansion in the future.

There are, it is to be observed, two distinct flag industries in operation in this district, in the neighbourhood of Luncannet Bay.

The first description is that connected with what is known as the "Black Mohar Flag," found near the celebrated cliffs of that name.

There are of this description four or five quarries, which are altogether worked by the small farmers, the flags being sold by them on the spot to a local speculator, who ships them to Belfast.

About 1,000 tons, worth 1*s.* a ton, are shipped in this way as the course of the summer months.

The second industry referred to is connected with flags of a description altogether superior to that just described, and pronounced by competent judges to be equal, if not superior, to the stone of the same class obtained in Yorkshire and Lancashire.

56. There are two separate quarries of this latter description; the first, known as the Calaharna Quarry, is situated in the Killybeg District Division, on the property of Mr. H. V. MacNamara of Binn-

man House, and is leased to a firm of Manchester architects, Messrs. Maxwell and Tuke.

The second, known as the Denogore Quarry, is on the property of Colonel Gore, in the District Division of Leitrim, and is in the hands of Messrs. W. Hampson and Company, quarry-owners and masons, of Huddersfield.

The former, according to returns obtained by me, have this year sent away 14 or 15 schooners, with on an average a cargo of 150 tons, worth about 250*l.* each, and there remains, either at the quarry or on the quay awaiting shipment, about 1,000 tons more.

The work, in both these cases, is done by labourers, the skilled labour being, as yet, necessarily imported at considerable extra expense, and the cutting is done by the local farmers. The rates of wages earned at this work have been already given in detail in paragraph 20.

The operations at the other quarry have been hitherto on a good deal a smaller scale, but the arrangements connected with there only now in process of completion, and will shortly, I understand, be very considerably extended.

57. Two special impediments have, I find, presented themselves in the way of successfully working these important ventures up to the present.

The first impediment is that connected with the distance of the quarries from the quay of Luncannet where the flags are shipped, Calaharna being 5, and Denogore about 5 miles off.

The second is the defective nature of the harbour accommodation at present available at Luncannet.

58. The locality was I understood imported by his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant in 1891, and as the topics just referred to formed subsequently the subject of a memorial addressed to his Excellency by the firm of Messrs. Maxwell and Tuke, and of a statement made at a public meeting held in July 1891 at Luncannet by Mr. Hampson, the senior member of his firm, I shall I think best conclude my observations as to this by inserting these statements, marked respectively A. and B. in the Appendix hereto, and by so bringing them to the notice of the Royal Commission.

59. It has been already explained that as regards the class of small farmers in this union the manufacture of better is now the staple trade.

It is deserving of observation, however, in connexion with this subject that circumstances, which appear to have taken so strong a hold on the farmers in some of the other better-producing districts with which I have dealt, have here no existence, the latter being all made by the farmers at their own farms and then disposed of, for the most part, at the local markets now held weekly at Rosneath and Milnava, Malbay, where buyers from a distance regularly attend for this purpose.

The trade has now attained very considerable dimensions here, as may be judged from the fact that according to the returns furnished to me the number of frames sent away by train from Rosneath Station alone during the past year was 7,800, which at 3*s.* per frame, which is about the present and recent price, represents a very substantial sum.

I have not been able to obtain a return from the Milnava Malbay Station, where the sales effected weekly are said to be also very large.

60. There are about eight or nine more or less considerable owners of property in the union, three of the number, including one of if not the largest, reside altogether on their estates. Some live in other parts of the county or of Ireland, and one (Lord Londonderry) is a nobleman living in England, but represented by an agent permanently resident in the county Clare.

61. As already stated, the labourers are chiefly concentrated in the towns and villages, except those employed as herds and resident farm servants.

62. The use of the farms has been already touched on in the course of my preliminary observations.

63. The earnings of the several classes of labourers have been already fully detailed under head III.

As regards the cost of living, a witness who has been during a long and busy life intimately and practically acquainted with the condition of the working classes generally throughout the union, says:—

"The labourers are better off now than 10 years ago, " or than I ever knew them to be; the food is cheaper, " and they are better paid, " and this, no doubt, is, as a general proposition, quite a correct statement of the case. In partial confirmation of this I append, as in

THE
ARMS
THE
LABOUR
THEImpediments
to
commerce.First im-
pediment.Second im-
pediment.The Lord
Lieutenant.The better
industry.Grass and
cattle.Denogore
Quarry.Milnava
Malbay
Market.Distances
of estates.Description
of labourers.Size of
farm.Earnings
and cost of
living.

Evidence.

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER.

Wicklow
and
the
labourer.

General
condition
of the
labourer
as
affected
by
a
wage
system.

other costs (marked G), a return showing the contrast prices of workhouse supplies at the present time and in 1888.

64. I close my references to the general condition of the agricultural labourers at the present time in this union with an extract from the evidence supplied to me on the subject by a practical farmer, whose judgment in such matters is, I am aware, much and deservedly regarded by all classes in his district. He says—

"The general condition of the agricultural labourers, though of the very worst in many respects, particularly in regard to houses and maintenance of work, is on the whole much improved within the last two or three decades."

"The wages have more than doubled during that period."

"The food given them by the employers, and of which they partake at home, is of a superior nature to the old style of the potato."

"But whilst it is regrettable that only in very few instances is there any regard for thrift."

"They live, to use an old phrase, from 'hand to mouth,' earning little for the morrow."

"This, I feel sure, is largely owing to those possessing no interest in the soil, or the cabins they live in. To my mind, it appears that our legislators made a serious mistake in drafting the Labourers' Bill not making the garden an Irish or estate acre, and placing the labourer solely on the same level with the farmer, by making that class paying to the union for 35 years a certain rent they should then become the owners of the cottages and premises."

"This would prove an inducement to take care of the house, improve the garden, and pay the rent regularly, besides the value in the encouragement of thrift."

X.—CONCLUSIONS.

65. I have now endeavoured to give under the respective heads of my inquiry as accurate a description as it was in my power to do of the actual state of the facts, as they have presented themselves to my mind,

while engaged in visiting the several districts concerned.

66. As in all the other unions investigated by me, the complaints of the labourers may be summed up, it has been seen, in the demands they make and all earnestly urge for improved house accommodation, with some land attached, and for continuous employment throughout the year.

That a moderate and reasonable extension of the provisions of the Labourers' Acts is called for by the present condition of things, especially in these districts to which I have already had to make special reference, admits, in my opinion, of no doubt; and though some very experienced witnesses appear to entertain the view that, if the labourers were willing to accept a lower scale of wages in the winter they could obtain continuous employment, it is not very easy to understand how or where it could be found by the outside class, in view of the acknowledged abandonment on all sides, of everything like tillage farming.

67. A large farmer in the north-west district of the union, where the want of continuous employment is most acutely experienced in the winter season, says to me—

"As regards the want of continuous employment, of which the labourers complain, I am of opinion that there is much room for winter employment on the farms; but unless the farmers become the owners, they will not put money in improving the lands of others. I am satisfied that if the land was their own, this would be largely the case; people take a pleasure in improving what belongs to themselves."

Opinions similar to this have been expressed to me, I may observe, by many other witnesses of the same class, both here and elsewhere; but the question I have given will probably be considered sufficient in the present instance as an illustration of the point of view from which the question is just now regarded by them in the Enniskerry Union.

I have, &c.

(Signed) W. P. O'BRIEN,
Assistant Commissioner.

APPENDIX A.

MEMORIAL FROM MESSRS. MAXWELL AND TYRE, ARCHITECTS, OF MANCHESTER, LONDON, OF THE CARRIAGE-INTERIOR STATE QUARTERS, REPRESENTING THE INCONVENIENCES EXISTING FOR CERTAIN IMPROVEMENT IN THE HARBOUR OF LABRADOR.

20, PRINCE STREET, MANCHESTER.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF STRATHMORE, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

We, the undersigned, being owners of the Labrador Quay Company, having learned from our legal representatives in county Clare that your Excellency, on a recent tour in West Clare, honoured our quarry with a visit, and expressed a desire to hear more of the prospects and intentions of the Company, beg to assure your Excellency of our great regret at not being present when you visited the quarry, as we certainly should have been had we known of your proposed visit to the district.

We may say, for your Excellency's information, that two years ago circumstances led to our visiting West Clare, to inspect the geological formation, and we found a considerable tract of land containing laminated flag rock, of an excellent quality, equal to the Callanagh Plugs in the North of Scotland, and superior to the celebrated Lonsdale and Yorkdale Plugs.

After great difficulties we, through the aid of Mr. Higgins, solicitor, Lonsdale, secured the quarry for now being worked by us at Caherbarna, and we have since secured several other tracts, which, if circumstances permit, we shall open and work.

Three difficulties prevail at present in the development of the industry to any considerable extent, which we beg most respectfully to lay before your Excellency, with the hope that you will be able to give us such assistance as you may graciously consider the Government may properly render to further an important industry in this poor and congested district.

1st. There is considerable difficulty in dealing with the local workmen, but this we hope to overcome by the best and good management of our local adviser, Mr. Higgins, in whose hands we have left, as far as practicable, the arrangement with all the local men, other workmen, farmers, carriers, or others.

2nd. The quantities of flags required to be shipped in order to meet the fixed expenses will be at least three

times the present output, and this will require a railway (tramway) from the quarry to the quay. This we are prepared to put down at our own expense, provided the land can be obtained at reasonable prices. But should the Government put down a railway from Lahinch through Lonsdale and Doolin to Lonsdale, the home traffic would be very great from Doolin to Lonsdale, whilst a considerable fish traffic from Lonsdale over the West Clare Railway could be discharged.

The third difficulty is certainly beyond our power to remove, and we must depend entirely upon the Government to do this. The harbour of Lonsdale is altogether inadequate, and its approach is dark. We are informed by men who are constantly sailing on the west coast that if the harbour was better and lighted, it would form an excellent port, as the ground in the bay is good "holding" ground, and the port better to make than any which are much more used.

We are convinced if the port was made safer by lighting, and the harbour deeper, that we should be able to ship 1,000 tons of stone from Lonsdale weekly, and this would employ some 500 workmen, chiefly natives, and would bring 30,000 to 40,000 yearly in wages into the district, besides adding considerably to the income of the owner of the land from royalty rents.

We have no doubt of the quality and extent of the stone, but without harbour facilities very much better than the present it is impossible to work the quarry so as to pay.

What is actually required is to make the present harbour, of feet deep, of steep sides all over, it is now only available on one side.

If both sides could be used, six or eight vessels could shelter in, and four vessels could be discharged or loaded at the same time.

The entrance to the bay wants lighting, so as to be made to approach in dark weather.

Trusting your Excellency will be able to recommend the Government to seriously consider the desirability of carrying out the above works.

(Signed) JAMES MAXWELL,
FRANK MAXWELL,
WILLIAM CHARLES TYRE.

Dated 16th June 1891

APPENDIX B.

THE
ANALYST.
JAMES
LABOURER.

At a special meeting held in Limerick, on the 2nd July 1891, for the purpose of urging on the Lord Lieutenant the expediency of appointing certain improvements in the harbours of Limerick, the Most Reverend Dr. McCann, Lord Bishop of Galway, Kilmacomb, and Kilfenora in the chair, the following statement was made by Mr. W. HANCOCK, senior partner in the firm of MANN, HANCOCK and Co., quays-owners and mariners, RINGROSEHEAD, THE MESSERS OF THE DOVERIDGE FLAG QUARRIES:—

"My Lord and Gentlemen,—It is about five years since I first became aware of the fact that flag and some quays of an exceptional quality existed in this locality. Michael McDonnell, of Donoree, called on me at Liverpool, and informed me that he had a cargo of flags for sale. I examined them, knocked one of them, and when I saw that the quality was good I purchased the cargo. McDonnell was much surprised at the knocking process, and he asked me to send a man over to Ireland to similarly prepare the flags there. I did so, but for some reason he did not get on very well, and I decided to come over myself and carry on the work. There is no reason, if proper harbour facilities were secured, why the quarrying industry in this locality should not be successful. The great drawback hitherto was the want of scientific training of the local men in the knocking and preparation of the flags, but now they are being educated in the process, and will soon become masters of their work. I see that it is stated in the memorial of Messrs. Maxwell and Yule that the flags here are equal to Yorkshire flags,

but I believe they are much better. James Newland, Esq., an expert in these matters, made an analysis amongst others of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Welsh, Gallic, and Kilrush flags, and in his report, which is in the Free Library at Liverpool, it is stated that the Kilrush flags are superior to any of the others tested. Now the Kilrush flags are similar to the flags known as the Mohr flags, and they are not at all equal to those lying in the newly-opened beds at Catherston and Donoree. I hope I have conveyed to you even remotely what a great advantage it would be to this part of Clare if these quays could be properly worked. I am not accustomed to public speaking, having been educated in a college where the motto was 'more work and less talk.' I began working in quarries at the age of nine years, and I worked for wages that even in Ireland I am afraid would be considered too small, namely, 2½d. per day, but it has pleased God that I am now a partner to employ a large number of working men, both here and in England. There is another point in the memorial which refers to labour troubles, and I would like to say a word about that. I do not believe that we will have troubles of any consequence here when we begin the work in earnest. The labourers will see that it is more to their advantage to perform their day's work, and earn a good day's hire, than to be looking into newspapers and imagining that they have all sorts of grievances. For my own part I can say that, and I have had considerable experience of working men in England, Scotland, and Wales, that I was never so well received anywhere as in the County Clare."

APPENDIX C.

RESISTION UNION.

RETURN OF PRICES OF THE PRINCIPAL ARTICLES OF WORKINGMEN'S CONSUMPTION.

	Year 1882	Year 1883		Year 1888	Year 1892
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.		£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Wheat flour - - - per ton	12 0 0	13 0 0	Tar - - - per box	0 0 5	0 0 8½
Oatmeal - - - - - " "	14 0 0	15 1 0	Candles - - - per lb.	0 0 4½	0 0 4
Indian meal - - - " "	7 9 0	7 6 0	Matchsticks - - per per	0 3½ 8	1 1 0
White bread - - - per lb.	0 0 1½	0 0 1½	Rags - - - each	0 6 3	0 7 10
Red soil (mortar) - - -	0 0 1½	0 0 7½	Beagal strips - per yard	0 0 4½	0 0 2½
Tax - - - - - " "	0 1 8	0 2 0	Bricks - - - each	0 4 2	0 4 1½
Sugar - - - - - per cwt.	6 47 0	6 18 0	Chalk - - - - - " "	0 0 7½	0 0 8
Rice - - - - - per dozen	0 0 10	0 0 9½	Plaster (stripped) - -	0 1 1½	0 1 1½
Milk - - - - - per quart	0 0 1½	0 0 1½	Corduroy - - - - - " "	0 1 3½	0 1 8½
Washery - - - per gallon	0 18 0	0 15 0	Leasing cotton - - -	0 0 3½	0 0 4½
Wine (Malaga) - - per dozen	0 14 0	0 15 0	Shaving ditto - - -	0 0 4½	0 0 6
Potter - - - - - per cwt.	1 2 0	1 2 0	Iron sheeting - - -	0 1 0½	0 1 1½
Soap - - - - - per cwt.	0 13 4	0 14 4	Tickets - - - - - " "	0 0 4½	0 0 11½
Coal - - - - - per ton	0 18 0	0 14 9			

	Provisions and Necessaries.	Clothing.	Total.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1882 Average week's cost - - - - -	3 4	0 7	3 11
1892 " " - - - - -	3 4	0 5	3 9

October 1892.

(Signed) JAMES O'NEILL,
Clerk of Union.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

I R E L A N D.

R E P O R T

BY

MR. W. P. O'BRIEN, C.B.
(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER).

UPON THE

POOR LAW UNION OF CASHEL.
(CO. TIPPERARY).

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APPENDIX A.

Return of contract prices for workhouse supplies.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

To GEORGEY DRAGE, Esq., Secretary,
Royal Commission on Labour

Manchester, Co. Dublin,
20th November 1892.

Sir, I take the honour to submit, for the consideration of the Royal Commission on Labour, my report on the condition and circumstances of the labourer in the agricultural labourer town and works, at the present time, in the town of Cashel, where, in accordance with arrangements previously made with Mr. Little, (Senior) Assistant Commissioner, I arrived on the 12th instant, and at once entered on my inquiry.

On the following day, I attended the weekly meeting of the Board of Guardians, in conformity with my usual practice, for the purpose of explaining the scope and nature of the inquiry I had been instructed to institute in the Union, and of inviting the co-operation and assistance of the members, in furtherance of which object I supplied them with copies of the usual inquiry notes and forms for their guidance and information.

I subsequently placed myself in communication, either personally or by letter, with the principal clergymen, landowners, magistrates, and large farmers, in the union, as well as with numerous union and sanitary officials and others, where I judged to be capable of adding to the elucidation of the facts bearing on the subject of my investigation, and I desire to acknowledge here, with many thanks, the readiness and fullness with which in the great majority of the cases my request was complied with. There, in this connection, to especially record my sense of obligation to the clerk of the Union for the valuable returns and information he was so good as to prepare for me.

In addition to the several steps just enumerated, I subsequently attended by special appointment at the towns, villages, and police stations of Killemae, Fethard, Donagha, Dunsinn, New Inn, Rosgram, Longford, and Clontarf (Rosmore), where, as well as in Cashel I took the evidence of numerous representatives of the labourer and small farmers, who met me for the purpose at these places, and where, as far as was practicable, I likewise took occasion to satisfy myself by personal inspection as to the condition of the houses occupied by the labourer; both those held under the Board of Guardians under the Labourers Acts, and the more numerous ones held by them from private owners.

To the officers and men of the Royal Irish Constabulary, who afforded me much local assistance in these visits, I am only repeat here what I have stated in all my previous reports as to the willing and valuable assistance I have, in almost every instance, experienced at their hands.

As in all my previous reports it will, I think, be convenient here, too, that I should prefix my detailed reference to the several heads of inquiry with some preliminary observations, explanatory of the general character and history of the Union, which I am now about to deal.

By the Act 5 & 6 Wm. IV. cap. 96 (1835) the Lord Lieutenant in Council is empowered to divide any county in Ireland into two separate divisions, for sanitary and other purposes.

In pursuance of this provision Tipperary, though amongst the Irish counties has been so divided, and consists now of two distinct ridings, known as the North and South Ridings, having separate county towns (New Inn and Clontarf), with separate courts of assize, separate grand juries and separate official staffs for all local and other objects of local administration. Thus, in fact, constituting, for all practical purposes, two distinct and independent counties.

It may be observed here, as to this, that Cork County has also been divided into two ridings (East and West), under the provisions of the Act 4 Geo. 4, cap. 98 (1822), but this has only reference to the holding of quarter sessions, and the arrangement has not in that case, been since further extended.

Cashel Union is situated in about the centre of the South Riding. It is an entirely island district, and is bounded on the north by the Union of Tharion, on the east by the county Kilkenny, on the south by the Unions of Clontarf and Clontarf, and on the west by the Union of Tipperary, through which runs part of the famous tract of rich calcareous loam so well-known to all Irish agriculturists as the "Golden Vein," extending from the county Limerick to the county Kilkenny, and the soil of which is celebrated for its remarkable fertility and general excellence.

The area of the entire Union, including bog, waste, &c., is 155,137 acres, the Poor Law valuation of which is 107,630, or about 12s. 8d. per acre, and the population, as given in the census of 1891, is 22,583, as against 24,228 in 1881, and 29,127 in 1871; thus being equivalent to a reduction in the previous population of 10.4 and 24.3 for these periods respectively.

The Union has for its centre and capital the ancient city, familiarly known to all antiquaries as "Cashel of the Kings," and, though it is now sadly shorn of its former glories, its great antiquity and the interest attaching to the many ruins still extant of its past history are of sufficient importance to call for a passing reference to them here.

The city stands in close proximity to the famous "Rock of Cashel," which rises to a height of about 300 feet above the level of the surrounding plain, lying to the east of the River Suir.

On the summit of this rock are the really splendid ruins of what were, once the palace of the Kings of Munster, the episcopal palace, the ancient cathedral, one of the well-known round towers of Ireland, and, lastly, the famous stone-roofed church of "King Cormac's chapel."

The precise date at which this very interesting chapel was built is long been a subject of controversy amongst antiquaries, some regarding for the beginning of the 10th, and others for the first-half of the 12th century.

The latter was adopted by the late eminent Irish antiquary, Dr. Petrie, who has pronounced it to be one of the most curious and perfect specimens of the Anglo-Norman type of architecture to be met with in the British Empire.

It was here that a council of the entire clergy of Ireland, the celebrated "Synod of Cashel," was held by order of Henry II., in 1172, when several important statutes were confirmed and subscribed, and when, too, Ireland was formally and finally annexed to the British Crown.

The city of Cashel of the present day presents, as it is to be regretted, a sad contrast to all this, and must, as it is to be feared, be regarded as being still in the stage of gradual and progressive decline.

Even as recently as 1891 it contained a population of 4,592, inhabiting 768 houses; in 1881 these figures had fallen to 3,951 and 717, respectively. While the census returns for 1891 show only a population of 3,216, with 657 houses, of which 66 are stated to be "uninhabited," this being equivalent to a reduction, within 30 years, of nearly 30 per cent. in the population, and 19 per cent. in the number of houses.

The general face presented by the country inland, though in parts undulating, considerably, but in the north-western section of the Union is encountered a range of hills known as the Glengough Mountains, and in the district of Killemae, in the north-east, the country is also more or less hilly in character, while the south-eastern extremity is bordered by the historic mountains of Slieve Donard.

The soil itself may be described, generally, as a limestone formation, with some slight admixture of other characteristics, chiefly clay shale.

In the Blinnagh hills, to the north-east, there are extensive beds of anthracite coal and iron, as well as flag rock, but except to a very limited extent, these appear to lie outside the immediate confines of the Cashel Union, and call, therefore, for no notice here.

The soil presents considerable diversities in point of character and fertility, but it is upon the whole of deep, rich, and many areas of excellent quality.

R-S. GARDNER.—It is for the most part in the nature of a stiff clay; but in part of Cuskel electoral division, and in the five electoral divisions lying immediately to the north of it, limestone gravel is the predominating element, and, in other places, it is a sandy loam.

The following figures, taken from the Rate Books, will best illustrate the diversities in the ratio of valuation to area, presented by different electoral divisions, viz:—

Electoral Division	Area	Valuation	Average Valuation per Acre
Cuskel, East	4,695	2	2 s 6
Cuskel, West	4,898	1,200	1 s 0
Clashier	10,776	5,000	3 s 0
Clashier	1,587	1,300	3 s 4
Entire Town	126,221	301,450	3 s 5

15 The farms in this Union are, speaking generally, tolerably large.

The total number of rated holdings is 6,506, which, if divided into the area and valuation, gives an average of twenty-two acres, and 141-10s. valuation for each holding. Several of the farms are, however, of considerable size, some of the witnesses examined by me here, they stated, holdings of from 800 to 1,000 statute acres, while many others returned theirs at from 200 to 400 acres, and upwards.

Probably an average of from 40 to 50 or 60 acres would be about a fair and accurate estimate of the size of the general run of farms to be met with throughout the Union; the facts are to that, however, varying a good deal in the different districts.

The best indication as to this will be found in the statistics as to the number of qualified jurors.

The qualification for a special jury is here a valuation of 150*l*. and upwards, and there are 45 returned as possessing this qualification in Cuskel Union.

The qualification for a common jury is a valuation of 50*l*. in the county, and 30*l*. in towns, and, under these heads, there are 440 qualified, of whom 386 appear to possess the true qualification of 40*l*., and 54 that possessed for the towns.

16 The nature of the farming pursued is mixed, and consists of dairy farming, the rearing and feeding of stock, fat cattle, and sheep, and tillage.

Wheat making is, at the present time, the decidedly predominant feature in this respect, as may be judged from the fact that there are seven threshing machines in operation in the Union, and several others in the immediately adjacent districts; but the extent of dry stock and sheep farming is also considerable, and the tillage farming pursued here is on a very much larger scale than in any one of the Unions hitherto reported on by me.

17 The fact just referred to is, no doubt, mainly attributable to the circumstance that the soil is here, in some districts, better adapted to this than to any other purpose, and is especially favourable to the cultivation of malting barley, which, though it has recently suffered a decline in value, has proved, it is stated, upon the whole, in this locality a fairly remunerative crop.

An English settler here, of considerable skill and experience as a practical farmer, says as to this:—

"I farm 1,000 acres statute. I have 120 acres (Irish) tillage (i.e., about 240 statute measure). I grow oats and barley, and I have 80 acres of green crops."

"I have been here 25 years, and introduced barley growing. It is now, after a long delay, generally adopted, and pays very fairly, as a rule."

Another extensive farmer in the same locality, holding 800 acres (statute), states that he has the still larger proportion of three-fourths, or 600 acres in all, under tillage, the barley crop being, in this case also, largely relied upon.

In many other cases, however, tillage appears to be here, at this time, limited to the production of what the farmers require for their own domestic purposes.

18 It does not appear that any striking change as to this has taken place in recent years, but farmers of intelligence, who have had a long acquaintance with the district, estimate that the substitution of growing for tillage during the past 20 years has been about

30 per cent., and that about one-third of this reduction has taken place within the last decade.

No fixed tendency in the same direction is, it is certain, observable at the present time, in this quarter, and some very competent judges here with whom I have been in communication anticipate, on the contrary, that an opposite result, in the not distant future, is by no means improbable.

There is much intelligent and experienced witnesses, who farms himself between 800 and 900 acres at the present time, says with respect to this:—

"Tillage farming has been declining; but I think they are disposed to go back now. Stock farming has ceased to pay, and if this continues, the large farms will have to be broken up, in my opinion."

19 Omitting exceptional cases, in both directions, it may probably be estimated that the proportion of the farms in this Union devoted to tillage ranges at the present time from about one-fourth or one-fifth to one-fifth, as a general rule.

20 In regard to its financial burdens this Union compares favourably with nearly all those hitherto dealt with by me.

The poor rate for the present year ranges between a minimum of 1*s*. 1*d*. and a maximum of 2*s*. 1*d*., the average being only 1*s*. 8*d*., and there being no debt under the Seed Supply Act of 1891 to be added to this.

The Union of Cuskel is, for the most part, situated in the barony of Middlethird, but is also, in part, included in the baronies of Kilmarnagh, Shrewsbury, and Clonsilla.

The poundage of the two last half-yearly levies of county cess, or rate, in these baronies was as follows, viz:—

	s.	d.
Middlethird	2	6
Lower Kilmarnagh	2	6
Shrewsbury	2	10
Clonsilla	1	11½

21 It only remains to notice the statistics of pauperism at the present time as compared with those of 10 years ago:—

	1890.	1880.
Number in Workhouse	361	423
Number on Outdoor Relief	507	502
Total in receipt of Relief	868	925
General average cost of Food and Maintenance per Week	5 s 9d	5 s 9d

From the foregoing figures it will be seen that, while there has been a reduction this year in the number of workhouse inmates of 15*l*., the number in receipt of outdoor relief shows, on the contrary, an increase of 25, thus reducing the net decrease between the two periods quoted to 12*l*., or about 12 per cent. of the total number relieved in 1880.

22 This concludes my preliminary observations, and I shall now proceed to deal with the several heads of my inquiry in the usual order.

I. THE SUPPLY OF LABOUR.

23 The statements made to me as to this, in the different districts visited by me in the course of my inquiry, are, as might be anticipated, of a very conflicting character.

On the side of the farmers it is alleged that in the harvest season they find it absolutely impossible to obtain labourers enough to sow their crops; and, as the result of the best information I have been able to collect on the subject, I incline to the conclusion that the representations made as to this are well founded in fact, and to a rather considerable extent in several localities.

Similar representations have been made in nearly every union I have visited, but, tillage farming being here a good deal more extensive than in many other places, the difficulty is experienced, of course, in a more acute form.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

Endnote.

Proposed 12124s.

Pauperism.

County rate.

Pauperism.

Continuation of previous table.

Conflicting statements.

Pauperism.

Reproduction of previous table.

26. Thus, in one important rural district in the north-western section of the Union, the sergeant is charge of the constabulary system stated as to this:—

"The supply of labour in this locality is equal to the demand, except for short periods in the busy seasons of the year, when a few additional labourers are hired by some farmers, who are obliged to go to Cuskel on Thursday to procure them."

The chief difficulty, however, that presents itself in connection with this branch of the inquiry has reference not to the harvest and other busy seasons, but to those slack periods of the year when farmers are able to dispense, in great measure, with the labourers' assistance.

25. In every district of the union, I may say—whether in towns or country—the labourers allege that they are at such times idlers completely idle, and are entirely dependent for support on the produce of their potato-plots (where they have them), the pigs and fowls they sometimes keep or, in some localities, on such assistance as their wives are able to procure by begging from amongst the neighbouring farmers.

Some of the witnesses have fixed this condition of things as that which regularly prevails from the end of October to the opening of spring work in February, but the great majority go much farther than this, and allege that they are idle for fully half of the year, or even more.

26. As against this, witnesses, giving their evidence from the farmers' standpoint, state that all industrious and steady labourers could command continuous employment throughout the year, if willing to accept reasonable wages—such as the farmers could possibly afford to pay them—and that it is entirely owing to their unwillingness to do this that the farmers are obliged to make shift, as best they can, to get what is necessary done by their own families, with such assistance as the farmers nowadays find it expedient to give one to another.

27. In illustration of the position of the farmers with respect to this I give here the view of a large farmer in one of the rural districts, who is also the Poor Law guardian of his electoral division, and was specially commended to me as an intelligent and reliable reference on the subject of my inquiry. He says as to this:—

"At present there are not enough of agricultural labourers in this neighbourhood, and this is the men of them are without employment, and this is the men who go out by the day or week, the reason I can give you in this is founded on facts, that the farmers cannot afford to pay and support them, the price of agricultural produce being so low, and the food the labourer requires in those times being of such a costly character."

"Twelve or fourteen years ago the labourer would have potatoes and milk for breakfast, potatoes and butter for dinner, and oatmeal straw for supper, now we farmers must give them bread, butter, and often eggs for breakfast, meat for dinner four or five days in the week, and the other days butter, and very often tea for supper."

28. Having thus given briefly the views conveyed to me by numerous witnesses, of both the labourer and farmer classes, I shall conclude my reference to the subject with a quotation from the evidence of a witness who is neither labourer nor farmer, but who has earned a most extraordinary reputation acquaintance with the facts of the case, which, I believe him to have stated with the most scrupulous accuracy, I refer to the Town Sergeant of Cuskel.

On the 11th instant I visited, under his guidance, the houses of all the labourers resident in Cuskel, with everyone of whose circumstances he was, I found, intimately familiar, and as his evidence may probably be accepted as being fairly typical of the condition of town labourers generally, in Cuskel Union, I give it here. He says:—

"I have been Town Sergeant since 1850. I would put the number of real agricultural labourers resident in Cuskel at 30, who are able to go into the field and do any work."

"From February to November there is full work for all and more than they can do, and they get 2s. 6d. a day, and the women 2s. 6d.; thus a only during the high pressure times, at other times they get 1s. a day."

"I have seen men in July months idle rather than accept 1s. for working in a meadow. During the next three months about half the 30 will be idle; they may get an odd day."

"If they were more reasonable, the small farmers would give them more work, but they cannot afford to

pay what is demanded, and so struggle to do their own work, and the small farmers help each other, they make amongst themselves what they call a 'coire.' The labourers generally keep pigs and fowls."

"The widow of the labourers has from the farmers, and other labourers are often indebted from hiring by them who have this to depend on."

"In addition to the 30, there are about 20 more or so menial labourers, such as Army Reserve men, and ex-military men, who have 6d. a day. These are not efficient workmen, they can make hay very well, but they cannot do work requiring skill. These men will get very little employment for the next three months—they get when employed 2s. a day."

"You will not get a man under ten hours the shortest day in the year."

II. THE CONDITION OF EMPLOYMENT.

29. The conditions of employment generally observed in this Union are both continuous and intermittent.

In the case of the constant gang and the class of large farmers there are usually several labourers permanently employed, in various capacities, and in regard to these the hiring is usually by the quarter, half-year, or year.

Even these are, however, obliged as a rule, to call in seasonally extra hands, during particular seasons of the year, and the hiring at such times is by the day or week, as the case may be.

Further intermediate between this and the smallest class almost invariably have one or more "seasonal boys," or seasonal labourers, who live and board with their employers, and are hired by the year or quarter. Any labour that may be required by them in addition to this is usually supplied by married men, either residing in houses on the farms of the employers, or in the vicinity, and in such cases the hiring is usually by the week, area where, as often happens, the same labourer continues to be so employed from year to year.

By both classes alike casual labour has to be employed during high-pressure times, and in all such cases the engagement is only either daily or by the week.

As regards the class of small farmers, it has been already explained, that as a general rule, they now provide for all the labour they require, either with the aid of their own families, or the friendly help which they are willing to lend each other in all emergencies.

30. The hours of work are usually from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. in summer, and in winter from daylight to dark, two hours being generally granted for meals.

In some cases work is not begun until 7 a.m., and then the labourer takes breakfast before leaving home, and only gets the hour for dinner.

Ten hours daily would best represent the usual time occupied by work, but it is in some cases more, and in others less.

31. Sunday work is little known, except in such special employments as may necessitate this less limited extent.

III. WAGES AND EARNINGS.

32. There is in this, as in other Unions, a good deal of diversity observable in the rates of wages that obtain in different districts.

In and about Cuskel it is stated by labourers, whether skilful or the reverse, will accept less than 2s. a day, but the most general scale throughout the Union is probably 1s. to 7s. a week where work is supplied, and 1s. to 10s. where food is not allowed.

In harvest and other busy times, however, an entirely different rate has to be allowed, and in such cases the labourers can now command almost whatever they please, 2s. 6d. to 3s. 6d. a day being what is usually paid, and food being at such times also usually given.

Resident "servant boys," who live and board with their employers, now usually receive from 10s. to 12s. and 14s. a year.

Labourers living on the lands of the farmers, and permanently employed by them, receive usually from 8s. to 10s. a week, with, however, as a rule, certain allowances of a very substantial character.

Thus an extensive farmer (1,000 statute acres) says as to his own arrangements:—

"I have about 10 labourers living in houses on my land, and these families are employed as well. They get 6s. a week, with free house and garden, and a quarter (Irish) acre of potato ground, mowed and filled by me."

W. V. GIBSON

"I also employ the young members, who earn 5s a week, and all keep pigs and fowls." Another large, but less extensive, farmer (250 acres) gives his permanent arrangements in this respect, as follows:—

"I employ seven permanently; one herd, the others all ordinary labourers; three have houses on the farm, houses free, and aqueducts (Irish) all potato ground, which I cultivate myself; they only seed and dig. One has a Union cottage. One of the others has 4 or 5 acres; and two live in town (Cashel). They all get 5s a week, and one has 11s and potato ground. They pay 1s a week for their houses. They all have pigs and fowls."

Of the permanent arrangements of farmers of a smaller class as to this, the following may, I think, be taken as typical cases, fairly illustrative of the general practice, viz. —

Number	Estimated Farmhouse	Name	Acres (Approx.)	Number of Labourers	Notes and Allowances
1	Grain	D. Walsh	50	3	One has his own (for his) dairy cattle on his own land on one of potato ground, if he had potatoes and house. One (her) is per work One, 1st per annum free and house with fowls.
2	Grain	L. Fogarty	30	1	Has a pig and free and house with fowls.
3	Cattle	D. Lee	20	None	Worked on his own's own family
4	Cattle	J. Hayes	20	None	Idem - ditto

The foregoing particulars relate to the classes of labourers who are permanently engaged by the same employers, and the following figures obtained from a district in the north-west of the Union, where the demand for labour is reported to be, generally speaking, equal to the supply, may, I think, be accepted as being, upon the whole, fairly typical of the state of things that obtain there in regard to those who work, not for any one in particular, but whom, where, and for whom they please.

33. In three cases on an ordinary labourer came during 24 weeks of the year, but these weeks he dedicated for wet days, &c. for the 24 working weeks 12s per week, equal to 12s 12s. During morning and harvest times 6s per week extra for five weeks, equal to 1s 10s. During remaining 24 weeks, 6s per week equal to 8s 8s. Total 22s 12s, in addition to food supplied by the employer.

34. Except as already explained there are no perquisites or allowances obtainable in this Union by the ordinary agricultural labourer, nor, as a rule, are there any occupations other than agriculture followed by them during part of the year, save that, in certain districts, some of them are, occasionally, employed, under the county surveyor, in stone breaking and repairing the county roads, at which from 2s. to 2s. 6d. a day may be earned, to a limited extent, some are, also, employed in quarrying and wood cutting, at which about 2s. a day is earned, but this industry employs very few labourers, and those only for a very short season.

35. The estimated annual earnings of the different classes of labourers in this Union may be stated to be as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Ordinary labourers	22	8	0
Skilled ditto	31	6	—
Shepherds	30	0	0 to 40 0
Men in charge of houses	31	6	20 8

This scale can, of course, only be considered as applying to the labourers who are able to command regular and continuous employment throughout the year. The earnings of those who are only casually employed, though often considerable, are too variable and uncertain to be made the basis of any even tolerably accurate estimate.

IV—COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.

36. The house accommodation of the labourers throughout by far the greater part of Cashel Union, so far as I can judge, is distinctly superior, upon the whole, to that of any one of the Unions I have yet

visited, but there is still, it cannot be denied, and more especially in the populous towns of Cashel, Fethard and Killealeen, a good deal of room for further improvement in this regard, while the very general absence of the all important plots of ground, in connection with the houses they occupy, has formed, I may say, a universal subject of strong and urgent complaint, on the part of the numerous witnesses of this class who attended to give evidence before me.

In fact as things stand at the present juncture in Ireland, this question of the housing of the working classes, appears to me to have become an paramount consideration, and as it is, moreover, almost the only grievance complained of by the labourers, for which a full remedy has been already provided by legislation, the subject is one manifestly deserving of the best attention of the local authorities, charged with the responsible duty of practically dealing with it.

In my report on Nass Union I took occasion to quote largely the opinions entertained as to this by an competent judge as the Chairman of the Board of Guardians, and he gives, in two sentences, so exact a representation of what I find to be the feeling now generally and gradually taking root in the minds of the labourers themselves that, I think, they may be here accurately reproduced. He says as to this—Paragraph 40, page 8:—

"My object would be to place every labouring man in the same position of independence, so that he could sell his labour to the best employer, and not be hampered by being obliged to work for any one in particular."

"I have some experience on this subject, and I do not hesitate to say that ultimately it will or must be done, as the class of labourers who are now living under the Board of Guardians are far and away better off than those who are living as cottiers under the farmers—far, while the one is comparatively independent, the other is not so, and he must work for the owner of the cottage, or be subject to be dismissed if he leaves the employment."

Thus in the evidence of a witness having a wide and intimate acquaintance with the general wants and feelings of the working classes in his immediate district, and I will only add to it a short extract from the evidence given before me at Fethard on the 18th instant, by one of the labourers themselves. John Ryan says as to this:—

"I am married and have seven children—I have a good house, but only hold it as pleasure—I pay for it 1s 6d a week, and have no land."

"I am anxious to get a Union cottage. A Union cottage gives independence—no one can put you out while you pay your rent."

37. Though, as just stated, there is still much appearing to be done in connection with this subject in the Cashel Union, it is only just to the Board of Guardians to add that they have been by no means inactive in the execution of the power and duties devolved upon them under the provisions of the several Labourers' Acts, 1853-91.

The number of cottages already built and occupied is 205, and there are 13 others in course of erection, in addition to which a new scheme, providing for the construction of 168 more, is at the present only awaiting survey and confirmation by the local authorities.

38. Strong complaints having been made to me as to the excessive cost of these cottages, and especially as to the amount of the preliminary and incidental expenses, I have obtained from the Clerk of the Union a detailed statement of the expenses incurred in regard to the 205 completed buildings, and give them here:—

The total cost of the 205 cottages was 22,002 7s. 6d., equal to 107 11s. 6d. each, viz. —

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
General expenses of scheme	638	10	7	6	10	7
Payment to ex. officers	371	7	9	1	16	2
Solutions, including costs of title	1,112	4	8	5	8	6
Purchase money of plots	2,739	16	4	13	7	4
Cost of building	15,926	2	4	77	12	2
" " fencing plots	1,290	5	10	6	4	11
Total	428,002	7	6	107	11	6

The Amount of the Union's

Chairman of the Union

Labourers' Cottages

Board of Guardians

Board of Guardians

Cost of Cottages

The
Labourer's
Union.

Union.

Local
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39. The house necessary to carry out this improvement scheme has been obtained from the Board of Works, for terms of 10 years, at an annual charge of 41 Rs. 24 per 1000, or about 9831, 3s. 6d. on above amount, equal to 46 12s. 11d. for each cottage per year, and they are let to the labourers at rents of, in the 21 rural electoral divisions, 3s. 6d. per month, and in the three town electoral divisions of Cashel, Ethelard, and Killemeade, of 3s. 6d.

40. The amount of rent actually received during the year ended 29th September, 1895, was 4482, 15s. 10d. and the amount remaining due at the same date was 1912, 4s. 6d.—a rather serious amount, having regard to the very moderate rent charged to the labourers, and to the fact that, during the year, the guardians expended as much as 2291, 2s. 8d. for repairs, taxes, and cost of collection, and last, in addition, 12s. 12s. 8d.—amounts lost due by certain tenants that they were compelled to evict.

41. I personally inspected as many of the occupied cottages as I could conveniently see, and in two visited by me on the 11th instance, on the road between Ballymore and Killemeade, rather better cottages have been made to me by the labourer's wives as to the entire inadequacy of the accommodation provided, I give the particulars, viz.—

No. 1. Michael Cleary, 11 in family, 3 rooms—kitchen, 15 by 10, two bedrooms, each 9½ by 7½ ft., as left.

No. 2. John Hennessy, 7 in family, 3 rooms—same as No. 1.

In other cottages I found the accommodation to consist, in addition to the two bedrooms of each 10ft. 6in. by 7ft. 6in., of a loft—extending over both bedrooms—a very important difference, the origin of which the Clerk of the Union subsequently explained to me.

In the scheme first carried out, and which included 80 cottages in all, only two bedrooms were provided, but, experience having demonstrated the insufficiency of this accommodation, the change referred to was adopted and followed in all the subsequent erections.

42. I found amongst the witnesses I examined that there was a considerable conflict of opinion as to the extent of land it was desirable to attach to these cottages.

The labourers, without exception, represent that half an acre is of little value, as it does not admit of any proper rotation of crops—and many of the farmers, I may observe, adopt the same view—but others maintain, on the contrary, that the half acre is as much as the labourer requires, or can properly sit on.

The truth would appear to be that this very much depends on the circumstances of each individual case.

An industrious and thrifty labourer, having grown-up children to help him, could certainly cultivate, and would probably require the produce of a full acre—while one without this aid, or less careful in his habits, might perhaps find half the quantity fully as much as he could manage with advantage.

This question has now, however, no practical interest except in regard to cottages and plots already in existence, the Act of last Session—35 Vict. cap. 7, sec. 3—having substituted "a statute acre" for the "half a statute acre" prescribed by the previous enactments.

43. The Consulting Sanitary Officer of the Union—Dr. Leeson, an officer of considerable intelligence and long experience, who evinces an earnest interest in this subject—expressed very forcibly that Sec. 3 of 34 and 35 Vict. cap. 71 (the Act of 1870) requires further amendment, and extension, by making it, in all cases, absolutely imperative on the Board of Guardians, and the Local Government Board, both alike, to co-operate and give effect to the existing provisions in regard to the erection of houses, and the acquisition of plots of ground for the use of the labourers, and, in support of the necessity for this, he points to the fact, that throughout almost the entire of Ulster, and the greater part of Connaught the Acts have been hitherto, practically, inoperative.

44. This is, in fact, the view that has been elsewhere very strongly pressed on me, that this question is one not admitting of any half-measures, and that the obligation of the State to provide labourers with houses and plots having been once formally recognized by the

17299.

Legislature, it has become obligatory on those administering the Acts to do so by a complete and exhaustive scheme, not by piecemeal, and that until this is done jealousy and dissensions will continue to rankle in the minds of the labourers.

V.—GARDENS AND ALLOTMENTS.

45. The several Gables, or "Guardians' Cottages," as they are termed, have each attached to them the prescribed statutory half-acre, and, so far as I have seen, it is usually sown off, as intended, for the growth of potatoes, cabbages, &c., for the use of the family.

In some instances it is, however, either sown with oats or in grass, the explanation given to me being that potatoes could not be grown every year in succession in the same ground, which is, no doubt, true.

46. Allotments other than these do not exist in the Union, no effect having been hitherto given to the provisions in this regard contained in Section 16 of 48 & 49 Vict. cap. 77 (Act of 1885) and Section 12 of 49 & 50 Vict. cap. 39 (Act of 1886).

The Consulting Sanitary Officer of the Union, already quoted under another head, while advocating the settlement, as far as possible, of the agricultural labourers in the rural districts, with even a more liberal allowance of land than that already sanctioned by Statute, urges very strongly the claims of those who must and necessarily will remain in the towns to participate in the advantages secured to their class by these enactments.

In this connection he calls special attention to the anomalous state of the Law, which, as it has been interpreted by the Law Officers of the Crown, precludes labourers resident in towns such as Cashel (situated within the district of an Urban Sanitary Authority) from obtaining such allotments, in any case whatsoever, on the purely technical ground that the Rural Sanitary Authority (the Board of Guardians of the entire Union, including the town of Cashel) cannot provide such accommodation outside their own parochial limits, while the Town Councils (under the Urban Sanitary Authority) cannot do so, inasmuch as the operation of the Labourers' Acts is by Statute confined to rural sanitary districts and authorities only.

With respect to the difficulty just referred to, it may be observed that if, on grounds of public policy, it is deemed advisable that labourers resident in towns should receive allotments as the neighbouring rural districts, it is difficult to understand on what principle the advantage is to be denied to those who accidentally happen to reside in towns constituting urban sanitary districts, but it must be added that the options of even very competent judges are much divided as to the utility of giving rural allotments in such cases at all.

Witnesses with the most friendly feelings towards the labourers, and who are intimately familiar with their wants and habits, believe—whether rightly or wrongly—that, if such plots were provided for them, the town labourers would not, as a rule, use the trouble of collecting the supply of manure necessary for the purpose, nor expend the labour required for their successful cultivation.

47. In the Union plots of potato ground are very commonly given by farmers to the labourers as their regular employment, or who are resident on their lands, even during and concerning the ground for them. In many instances, and in some districts, but not by any means in all, a plot may be often obtained by other labourers also, subject to the condition of their finding the manure and labour, and paying from 10s. to 12 per quarter of an acre for the use of the ground, which is in such cases only given for the year's crop.

48. There are no cow runs or cow grazes in this Union, as understood in England, but the grass of a cow is sometimes given by large farmers to herds, or other confidential labourers in their own employment.

49. There are no bees kept anywhere, and the livestock in the possession of labourers may be said to be confined to pigs, goats, and fowls, with occasionally a donkey.

VI.—RURAL SOCIETIES.

50. No such societies have any existence in this Union; a similar reply having been given as to this in every Union hitherto reported on by me, without exception.

VII.—TRADE UNIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

51. No such organizations are to be heard of, at the present time, in any part of the Cashel Union, so far as I could ascertain.

E—T
Classes.

From
cottages.

Allotments
under
48 & 49 Vict.
c. 77.

Paragraph
41.

Address
last page.

Private or
cow run
ground.

Cow runs,
and cow
grazes.

Bees, and
cow stock.

E.-V.
GARDNER.VIII.—GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS
AND EMPLOYED.

52. The general relations existing at the present time in the Cashed Union between the labourers and their employers are said to be, upon the whole, what may be described as being "fairly satisfactory."

It is, however, stated by some witnesses that, notwithstanding this, the general aim of the employers just now is everywhere to exact as much, and of the labourers to do as little, work as is possible.

IX.—THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL
LABOURERS.

53. No doubt can, I think, be entertained that, as compared with past times, the condition of the agricultural labourers in Cashed Union has improved considerably. They are now better paid, clad, and fed, and, to a great extent, much better housed than formerly; while, owing in part to the sensible effect of emigration in thinning the ranks, and in part to the occupation by them of houses and plots held, not under private owners, but under the local public authority, their general position is now one of far greater independence than it ever was before.

54. Notwithstanding this decided comparative amelioration in their circumstances, the information before me, as well as the results of personal inquiries instituted in the course of my visits to the several localities, leave no doubt on my mind that, in many districts at least of the country, the lot of such of the class as have wages and young families dependent on them in during the winter season, one of considerable privation, especially in the case of those who have neither Union cottages, with the plots attached to them, nor common potato ground to fall back upon during this interval of inaction.

55. The labourers resident in and about the towns are, as might be expected, those who suffer most in this respect. One principal resource of that class at such times is, it is admitted on all hands, the hawking and muckling one of the skins belonging to their wives from the generosity of the neighbouring farmers, but, even in some of the rural districts, the state of affairs in it is to be feared, during those periods far from being generally satisfactory.

56. No more reliable or disinterested evidence on this point can be obtained than that supplied by the local constabulary, and from this I shall now accordingly proceed to quote.

There is, it may be remarked, a considerable diversity observable in the circumstances of different districts of this Union, and this diversity will be found to be very fully reflected in the varying terms of the reports received by me.

From a district in the northern extremity of the Union the sergeant in charge of the station says, under this head of inquiry:—

"The general condition of the agricultural labourer is miserable enough, generally a very large family depending on it a day for their support, and so way of adding to the income by any better industry, which leaves a family very miserable and needy, even for the necessaries of life; half-fed, half-clothed, and half-housed. The houses uncomfortable and dirty. Paid very poor; no fire, except what comes from the road, which is generally potatoes, and sometimes tea and bread. No meat can be afforded."

From an important district, with a large town population, in the east of the Union, the employment is reported to be "usual," and "the general condition of the agricultural labourer bad."

The sergeant in charge of a district a few miles north of Cashed, in which the employment afforded is more regular, reports the general condition of the labourers to be "poor." And from the extreme eastern border of the Union, in a district having a populous village for its centre, the report is—"In poor circumstances, during winter months."

These quotations fairly represent the general drift of the unfavorable reports that have reached me, as against which some of a more satisfactory complexion from other quarters may be now referred to.

In the central district of the Union it is reported that "the employment of the majority is regular, some casual," and the general condition "fair."

From a purely rural district in the northern section of the Union it is reported that "the employment is generally continuous," and that "the general condition of the agricultural labourer is fair."

From another rural district, in the south-east of Cashed, the employment is stated to be of "some con-

tinuous, and others casual," and "the general condition of the agricultural labourer fair."

I shall close these quotations with one from an exceptionally excellent and carefully drawn report received from the sergeant in charge of a rather wild and mountainous district in the north-west of the Union, where, though the soil is inferior, the population is stated to be especially industrious and better off, in consequence, than those in more favoured localities. He says:—"Employment in this locality is regular and continuous, in consequence of the demand for labour being at least equal to the supply." And he adds:—"The general condition of the agricultural labourer in this locality is fairly comfortable, especially those who are in possession of cottages under the Labourers' Acts. Employment is constant and wages fairly good, so that labourers, in most instances, can live pretty well, and much better than in former years."

57. These quotations, it will be seen, fully confirm the general accuracy of the conclusion indicated by me in paragraph 54.

Providence has been already given in paragraph 23 to the contention of the employers, that the state of things complained of is the result of the unreasonable demands of the labourers, which the latter quite as strenuously deny.

The truth, most probably, is that there is more or less justification, on both sides, for the allegations made; but after the fullest consideration I have been able to give the subject, I feel compelled to adhere to the view expressed in previous reports, that many of the labourers' content, in certain districts command continuous employment, even at the most reasonable wages, during particular periods of the year.

58. The industries pursued in this Union, apart from the ordinary agricultural and pastoral operations, are not numerous, nor, except as regards one of these, of very much practical importance.

59. The exception is the Creamery industry, which appears to have taken a considerable hold on the farmers of this Union, in which there are at present in operation seven such establishments, viz., two at Killemaur, two at Fethard, one at Drangan, one at Cashed, and one in the north-west of the Union, in Closoney West Electoral Division, in addition to which there are some others so closely adjacent as to be, in part, available for the farmers of Cashed Union.

60. All the creameries here appear to be run on the "proprietary"—some on the "co-operative" principle, such as I took occasion to explain in detail in my reports, paragraph 38, on Keshmark Union.

61. The owner of the creamery at Drangan, and of one of those at Fethard, is a member of the Board of Guardians who was examined as a witness by me at Fethard on the 12th instant, when I took occasion to obtain from him the particulars as to his creamery operations.

It appears that between the two places the number of gallons of milk received daily, runs, at the height of the summer, to 4,000, which is paid for at the rate of 4½d to 6d per gallon, according to the varying prices of butter, but in this Union the farmer is not, as elsewhere, entitled to the separated milk, which he has to purchase back at 1d per gallon.

The number of hands employed at both these establishments is returned as 18, all local, with weekly wages averaging, on the whole, about 16s.

62. In Killemaur the daily receipts are stated to range from 700 to 1,500 gallons, with weekly wages about 5s, and price paid 4½d to 6d, with the same charge of 1d per gallon for returned milk.

63. In Cashed, the quantity received is less, viz., 300 to 921 gallons, at an average price of 4½d, with same charge for returned milk, and weekly wages 6s.

64. In the three remaining cases the operations are, probably, more limited, but I did not obtain particulars.

65. Here, as elsewhere, the question as to the relative advantages and disadvantages of replacing home-made butter by these partitions forms a subject of more or less agitated local controversy, but being entered fully into this aspect of the case in my Keshmark report, nothing further remains to be now added here upon that subject.

66. Until recently a very prosperous and successful trade was for many years conducted in the town of Cashed in the manufacture of tobacco and snuff, which

The
Agricultural
Labourer.Conclu-
sion
indicated
by the
evidence.

Definite

Creamery

Ownership
of cream-
ery prop-
erty.Drangan
and
FethardQuantity
of milk
received
daily.Price
received
for milk.Number
employed
and wages.

Killemaur

Cashed

Other
districtsRelative
advantages
and dis-
advan-
tages of
creameryTobacco
and snuff
business.General aim
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ers and
labourers.Compara-
tive im-
provement
in the
general con-
dition of the
labourers.Actual per-
centage
of employ-
ment.Town
labourers.Rural
labourers.Contribu-
tion reports.Diversity in
circumstances
of different
localities.Unemploy-
able town
labourers.Favourable
testimony.

afforded a good deal of local employment; the weekly wages earned being probably not much under from 10s. to 12s., and the weekly output being represented by about 600L in value.

For some reason or other this branch of industry has just been discontinued, but whether permanently or only temporarily I am unable to say.

67. In Feltham, which ranks next in importance to Cabot, and has a population of 1,637, there are two limited milling industries, both worked by water power, to be noted.

One is a sawing mill, which is found very useful in sawing timber for the town and surrounding district. It employs four hands during the year at weekly wages of 10s. to 12s. a week each.

The second is a mill, with three pairs of stones—very useful in the locality in making whole and broken meal, and grinding grain for cattle feeding—it employs for seven months of the year three men at wages of from 10s. to 12s. a week each.

It was stated with reference to these industries that if the present deficient water-power was increased, by turning into the Chesham river a continuous stream which exists at a point seven miles distant, the operations of both mills could be largely and beneficially extended, but as the estimated cost of effecting this improvement is stated to be only 500L, it is at once, matter for surprise and regret that local enterprise should have hitherto failed to accomplish it.

68. The subject of the size of farms in this Union has been already fully dealt with in paragraph 15.

69. The ownership of property in this Union is considerably divided, some of the proprietors being resident, and others non-resident.

The title of one of the latter—the Earl of Northampton—is situated in the electoral division of Oughterhead, in the north-western part of the Union, was sold by him last year to the tenants, 85 of whom purchased their respective holdings at, as I understand, about 16 years' rent.

70. So far as I can judge, the labourers here are distributed fairly enough over the Union, but it has been stated to me that in some instances sufficient care was not taken to locate the Union cottages where a necessity for them existed.

71. The present rate of wages and earnings of the several classes of agricultural labourers have been already dealt with fully in paragraphs 38-39.

72. There can be no doubt that the present wages compare very favourably with the rates obtainable in former times, and it is equally certain that a corresponding improvement has taken place contemporaneously in regard to the labourers' general scale of living.

73. In paragraph 27 I have quoted the evidence of a highly respectable and intelligent farmer giving his assurance of what farmers are now not only expected, but obliged to give the labourers desired by them, and which certainly appears to be not wanting in liberality.

74. Labourers living with their own families cannot, of course, command anything so extravagant as the witness describes, but unless in particular districts, and during those seasons when employment fails there, the diet of the labourers is undoubtedly now very much improved, as a general rule, to what it formerly was, though it may be very well questioned whether the large substitution that has taken place of beef's head and trot for the oatmeal porridge and milk, or potatoes and milk for the breakfast meal of former days, has not been on the whole a change for the worse, rather than for the better.

75. In connection with and bearing on this question I append, as usual, marked A, a return showing the contract prices of the different workhouse supplies during the year 1880 and 1882 respectively, and which it will be seen, in the main, indicate a substantial change in the assessor's favour.

76. In nothing, however, is the recent improvement that has taken place in the condition of the agricultural labourers more striking than in regard to their basic accommodation.

It is only necessary to refer to the reports on this subject prepared for the use of the Government in 1870 by the several Poor Law Inspectors to understand how miserably provided for, in regard to house accommodation, the great bulk of the labourers about everywhere then were. Now it is a real satisfaction to note, in driving through the country, how largely these have

already been replaced by the neat cottages and the valuable half acres of land provided under the Labourers Acts 1883-84.

Satisfactory—exceedingly satisfactory—though this is, however, it cannot be doubted, in my opinion, that a great deal more still remains to be accomplished in the same direction, and that until this stage is, as I trust it will before very long be reached, the presence of the cottages already constructed is far more likely to excite and intensify than to allay the discontent and jealousy of the very numerous class who still continue subject to all the privations and discomforts of the old condition of things.

X.—Comments.

77. Having gone into such details under each separate head of inquiry it is only necessary that I should here add, in closing, a few general observations, in the way of summary.

The complaints of the numerous labourers who appeared before me to give their evidence at the several sittings I visited resolve themselves practically into four, viz.—(1), the want of better houses, with an acre of ground attached, (2), in the case of those already holding cottages, a demand for an increase in the ground attached, (3), a demand for a higher rate of wages, and (4), and last, to the want of employment in the winter season.

Of the farmers many of these esteemed content that this last (No. 4) complaint would have little emphasis in most places, were it not for the unreasonableness of the labourers themselves, in seeking to exact a scale of wages and of costly support, which farmers, under existing conditions, are totally unable to afford.

Others, however, while agreeing in the opinion just advanced to us to the substantial demands of the labourers, admit that in many cases they are, as alleged by these, unable to find continuous employment; and these witnesses usually advocate, as the only possible remedy, the purchase of their holdings by the farmers, which they consider would lead to the execution of every necessary land improvement, and the consequent extension of employment.

78. I have in paragraph 69 referred to the fact of one non-resident proprietor, the Earl of Northampton, having recently disposed of his Cabot Union property by sale to the tenants, and one of the latter having offered to give evidence before me at Donagh, on the 15th instant, I availed myself of the opportunity to ascertain how far these allegations had been realised in that instance. He says—

"I live on Lord Northampton's old property, I bought my own holding—45 acres, waste, I gave 16 years' purchase of the rent, not a judicial rent, it was always the same. I bought last January twelve months (i.e. January 1883), the holding has been six years in my possession. About eighty-five tenants in Oughterhead Electoral Division purchased on this estate like myself.

"I consider the farms are better worked now than before the purchase.

"The farmers are better able now than before to improve the land. They have been draining and fencing. There is a necessity for leasing, but there is no fire burning more than eight miles off; this is likely to take place and is much required.

"I consider that the purchase of the farms has been beneficial. It has already benefited the labourers, but as yet the farmers have not capital to do much. Ultimately I consider it will benefit them."

As regards complaint No. 2, I have in paragraph 43 observed on the fact that the disputed question as to the precise extent of ground that should be attached to labourers' cottages has been by the Act of last Session, 65 Vict. c. 7, s. 3, set at rest, except as regards the cottages already in existence.

It may, perhaps, be permitted to me to suggest, at a matter well deserving of serious consideration in this connection, whether or not, on grounds of public policy, it is advisable, under existing circumstances, to maintain a distinction in this respect, between the present and future holders of cottages which can only, it is to be feared, have the effect of reviving and perpetuating amongst so considerable a body as the former have now grown to be, those feelings of discontent and dissatisfaction with their lot for the extension of which so much has been already successfully done by the remedial legislation of recent years.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. P. O'BRIEN
(Assistant Commissioner).

W. P. O'BRIEN,
Assistant Commissioner.

Complaints of the labourers.

Lord Northampton's estate.

Evidence of a tenant who has purchased his holding.

Size of Cottages Plot.

APPENDIX A.

CARMEL UNION.

TABLE OF CONTRACT PRICES FOR WORKHOUSE SUPPLIES.

—	1882.	1892.	—	—	1882.	1892.	—
White Bread -	£ s. d. 0 0 5½	£ s. d. 0 0 4½	Per 4 lbs.	Beever Heads -	£ s. d. 0 0 8	£ s. d. 0 0 7	Kach.
Brown Bread -	0 0 5½	0 0 4½	" 4 "	Sheep Heads -	0 0 8	0 0 7	"
Oatmeal -	14 0 0	11 0 0	" ton.	Scap -	1 1 6	1 3 0	Per cwt.
Indian Meal -	8 6 0	8 12 0	" "	Dips Candles -	0 8 4	0 8 4	" 40s. lbs.
Rice -	0 0 1½	0 0 1½	" lb.	Newport Coal -	1 8 6	1 8 10	" ton.
New Milk -	0 0 7½	0 0 6½	" gallon.	Blankets -	0 2 3	0 1 8½	" lb.
Tea -	0 2 2	0 2 0	" lb.	Hags -	0 7 0	0 5 0	Kach.
Cocoa -	0 13 0	1 0 0	" cwt.	Shirting Calico -	0 0 5	0 0 4	Per yard.
Sugar -	0 0 3	0 0 2	" lb.	Flannel -	0 1 1	0 0 10	" "
Eggs -	0 1 1	0 1 2	" dozen.	Check -	0 0 8½	0 0 8	" "
Beef -	0 0 4½	0 0 3½	" lb.	Frize -	0 5 7	0 4 5½	" "
Mutton -	0 0 4½	0 0 3½	" "	Corduroy -	0 1 9	0 1 9	" "
Beef Houghs -	0 0 2	0 0 2	" "				

(Signed) W. Poles,
Clerk of Union.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

I R E L A N D.

R E P O R T

BY

M R. W. P. O'B R I E N, C.B.
(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER),

UPON THE

POOR LAW UNION OF WEXFORD
(CO. WEXFORD).

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THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

To GEOFFREY DRAGE, Esq., Secretary,
Royal Commission on Labour.

Sir,

Monkstown, Co. Dublin,

31st December, 1892.

1 I have the honour to report for the information of the Royal Commission on Labour, that, as previously arranged with the Senior Assistant Commissioner, I proceeded to Wexford on the 2nd inst., and was there engaged during the three ensuing weeks in prosecuting my inquiry as to the conditions and circumstances under which the agricultural labourer lives and works at the present time in that Union.

2 I took on my arrival the same steps that I have in my previous reports described to obtain the assistance and co-operation of the best representatives of local interests and opinion that was accessible to me, and on the 10th instant I attended the weekly meeting of the Board of Guardians, through the published reports of whose proceedings, on that occasion, is the third local newspaper, my arrival in the Union, and the precise purpose of my visit were made known to all who felt, in any way, interested, or desired to take part in the subject of the investigation.

3 I have been, as, indeed, in every Union hitherto visited by me—experienced, I may say on all hands, the utmost courtesy and readiness to facilitate my proceedings, and afford me the information I required.

I wish, in this connection, to specially acknowledge my sense of obligation to the officers, and many of the other members of the Board of Guardians; to the particularly well-informed clerk of the Union, and, amongst the county officials to the county surveyor, the secretary of the grand jury, and his assistants.

4 I have been, as a result, much indebted also to the officers and men of the Royal Irish Constabulary for the valuable local information everywhere received from them, as well as for the important assistance they afforded me in procuring the attendance of both farmers and labourers to assist me on the occasions of my visiting the several stations for the prosecution of my investigation, and in placing at my disposal for the same purpose the use of a barrack room, where—as was often the case—no other suitable accommodation was available.

The stations visited by me in this way were: Taghmon in the west, Carrivick and Crossmurn in the north-west, Blackwater and Castlebridge in the north-east, Bridgetown and Duncormick in the south-west, and Killybeg and Taggart in the south-east—in addition to which I, of course, also took evidence in Wexford itself, with respect to that and the immediately adjoining districts.

5 Following the course adopted in all my previous reports, I take leave to submit here some preliminary observations bearing on the general characteristics and past history of the Union.

6 This is the most important Union of the four into which Wexford is divided. It occupies the entire of the south eastern extremity of the county, and is divided for poor law purposes into 33 separate electoral divisions.

It is in part an inland, and partly a maritime district; its boundaries being: north, the Union of Enniscorthy; west, the Union of New Ross; east, St. George's Channel, and south the Atlantic Ocean.

The area of the entire Union is 128,391 acres, including about 1,200 acres of waste, &c.

The poor law valuation is 108,374*l.*, equal to about 17*s.* 9*d.* per acre, and 3*l.* 1*s.* 8*d.* per head of the population—which is now 35,142, against 33,742 the return for 1881, and 40,460 in 1871—this being equivalent to a reduction of 5,608 or 9.5 per cent., and 1,488 or 13.6 per cent. of the present population within the last 10 or 20 years respectively.

The total number of holdings in the Union is 9,980,

which, being divided into the area and valuation, gives an average of nearly 13 acres, and a valuation of 10*s.* 11*d.* for each holding.

7 The physical features of the country are diversified somewhat. In the districts lying to the north-west and north-east, forming portions of the Barons of Shelmalone East and Shelmalone West, the general face of the country is undulating, and in parts hilly; while, to the south, the land situated in the Barons of Forth and Barry is generally of a level character, except that a few ridges to the south of the town of Wexford there is a range of rocky hills, known as 'the Faith Mountains,' which extend from west to east for a distance of about five miles, rising to a height of, as I should judge it, some 700 feet above the sea level.

8 The soil, which differs a good deal in quality, is for the most part either a heavy and stiff or a light clay. Near the seaboard it is, in part, sandy, and close to Wexford in the east, and Killybeg in the south, where considerable tracts of sloe-land have been reclaimed from the sea and brought under cultivation, it assumes the character of a valuable loam.

9 The geological characteristics also vary considerably in different sections of the Union.

The formation of the district, bounded by Keshige, Killybeg, Moyglash, Bridgetown, Killybeg, Duncormick, Newcastle Cross-roads, and Drinagh is carboniferous Newstone.

The land in this district is very fertile, and there are extensive and valuable limestone quarries and Portland cement works at Drinagh, about three miles to the south of Wexford town.

South-east of this district, between Wexford and Crossmurn, the formation changes and consists of lower albian, but between St. Margaret's and Carrivick Point the rocks are granite—the granite of Carrivick Point being, it is to be noted, of a reddish or flesh colour.

A band of old red sandstone, with valuable quarries at Keshige, separates the carboniferous Newstone district from the Cambrian area, consisting of gritstone and slate. This latter district is bounded on the north-west by a line, extending roughly from Rosy Beck south of Calvey to Bannow in the extreme south-west, but within this area are the hills already referred to as "the Faith Mountains," consisting of quartzite or quartz rock.

The land in the immediate vicinity of these hills has been proclaimed, I believe, by squatters, and is of but indifferent quality.

North-west of "the Cambrian area" the formation is again, as in the case of the district between Wexford and Crossmurn, lower albian.

10 The following particulars, taken from the rate books, showing the rate of area to valuation is a few of the electoral divisions, will best illustrate the diversities in the quality of the soil to which reference has been made, viz.,

No. 1.—INDETERMINATE SOIL.

Electoral Division	Area	Valuation	Valuation per Acre
	<i>Acres.</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
Newcastle	2,105	930	8 9
Whitechurch	4,829	1,950	8 0
Angharad	3,970	1,908	9 10
Killybeg	4,633	2,312	10 0

B-VI.
WELSHES.No. 2.—*Strathclyde Som.*

Lady's Island . . .	2,800	2,786	19 0
Kilcoona	2,427	3,191	18 5
St. Helen	2,992	2,561	17 8
Kilpaleak	4,107	3,535	17 9
ROYAL UNION . .	120,301	108,374	17 9

From these figures it will be seen that while, upon the whole, the soil of this Union may be pronounced to be of a fair description—some of it is excellent—there is to be noted an immediate comparison with this, in several instances, land of a decidedly poor and inferior character.

11. For the general and somewhat exceptional prosperity, however, which this Union has long enjoyed, the chief merit belongs, not to the quality of the soil, but, there can be no doubt, to the sturdy independence, frugality, thrift, and industry which have at all times conspicuously distinguished the inhabitants of the two baronies of Forth and Bargo, constituting the greater part of its territorial extent, and comprehending within their limits nearly two-thirds of its area, and more than three-fourths of the entire population of the Union.

The inhabitants of these districts at the present time are, in great measure, the descendants of the colony of Welsh settlers, by whom, and those of their countrymen who joined them at a later period, these baronies were planted, immediately after the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland in 1169, under Strongbow, whose first landing in this country was effected in the small harbour of Bannow, situated in the south-western corner of the Union—an event which was followed not long afterwards by the unconditional surrender of the town of Wexford to the successful arms of the invaders, and which culminated, less than three years later, in the Statute of Cashel, by virtue of which the transfer of the sovereignty of Ireland to the British crown was formally decreed.

12. Mixed up with these settlers of purely Welsh nationality were likewise, it is supposed, a considerable number of Flemings, who, having been driven out of their own land in the early part of the twelfth century by a succession of destructive invasions which laid waste the entire seaboard of the Low Countries, had come that period established themselves in Frieslandshire and Glamorganshire, from which it is believed, they largely migrated to swell the ranks of Strongbow's invading army.

It was owing to the admixture of this element in the population which constituted the original plantation that the peculiar dialect, which up to a comparatively recent date still obtained, especially in the Barony of Forth, was considered to partake of a Flemish as well as of a Welsh character.

Since the early part of the present century, however, the general use of this peculiar language has been on the wane, and though, even as recently as the year 1836, the then Lord Lonsdown (Earl of Mulgrave), on visiting the district, was presented by the inhabitants with an address written altogether in the Forth dialect, it may be said to have now, with few and rare exceptions, ceased to be either known or spoken by any class of the community.

13. In addition to this long-continued maintenance of an exclusive language, the settlers who constituted this first Anglo-Norman colony, as well as their descendants and successors, were likewise distinguished by many other traits and characteristics of a peculiar type, none of which have now, like their language, disappeared altogether, with the advance of modern times.

Amongst these peculiarities may be noted the habit of rendering themselves entirely independent of all external help by having, in their own body, tradesmen and artificers capable of supplying all their necessary and artificial wants, and of further cutting themselves

off from all connection with the outer world by rigidly confining themselves to intermarrying with their own people.

14. There were, besides these, many other characteristics not necessary to be noted here, but by which this remarkable people were long distinguished from the other inhabitants of the Union.

As already observed, however, these may be now regarded as being for the most part things of the past, the inhabitants of the two baronies constituting the territory of the ancient Welsh settlers being at the present time scarcely distinguishable from the ordinary population, except as the difference is tersely expressed by one of my correspondents, who says as to this:—

"They are now considerably mixed up, and the consequence is a hardy, industrious race of peasants, neither English nor Irish, but a mixture of both, and perhaps better than either."

15. The farms range for the most part from about 30 or 35 to 50 or 60 acres, but outside these limits are to be noted both some farms of considerable extent and a still larger number of very small holdings.

The number of qualified jurors may be referred to here, as in other previous cases, as the readiest indication available on this point. The qualification for special jurors in this county is 100*l*. valuation, and the number coming under this head is 215. The qualification for a common juror is 40*l*. in the county and 10*l*. in towns, and of these there are 1,501—thus making a total of 1,616 jurors duly qualified in both capacities.

The nature of the farming pursued is very mixed in character, and comprises, with a considerable amount of tillage, some dairy farming, but a very much larger proportion of sheep and general stock farming.

The extent of land under tillage, though a good deal reduced in some districts as compared with former years, is still, speaking generally, in marked contrast with what is to be met with in any of the Unions hitherto reported on by me.

In the case of the farms of the smaller class it may be stated that from about one-fourth to three-fourths is usually devoted to this purpose. On the larger farms it is less, but even as these it is probably from one-sixth to one-eighth, though in some cases no doubt it is considerably less than this.

17. The crops grown are usually barley, oats, potatoes, turnips, and mangolds, but very much wheat, and, in some particular districts, beans.

Formerly barley and beans may be said to have constituted the staple products of Bargo and Forth districts, but the latter has been in recent years gradually diminishing in extent—this crop, though at times highly remunerative, being found, in its general results, to be too uncertain and precarious to be much relied upon under existing climatic conditions. It is still, however, cultivated to a certain extent by some of the farmers of the smaller class in the Barony of Forth, though it seems to have almost disappeared in the adjoining Barony of Bargo, a farmer in which stated in his evidence before me as to this:—

"I farm about 34 Irish acres. Tillage about one-half—16 or 17 acres. I have three milch cows, young stock, and sheep. Crops, barley, oats, potatoes, turnips, and mangolds. No beans grown here for the last four years; it is an uncertain crop, and has had to be given up in consequence."

18. As regards the financial well-being of a public nature, the position of the Union is quite as favourable as it is in most other respects.

19. The Union is for the most part included within the limits of the four Baronies of Bargo, Forth, and Strathclyde (East and West, but it also includes, to a limited extent, parts of two other Baronies, viz., Rathfriland South and Bantley, and the following figures

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURERSOther
sources
of labour.See of
farm.

See also

Description
of farming.

Tillage.

Crops
grown.Barley and
beans.Fiscal
condition.County
also.

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER.

represent the burden for county purposes assumed in each of these six baronies during the past year, viz.—

Barony.	Poundage of Rate for last Twelve Months.
	s. d.
Bargy	1 9
Ballaghkeen	1 6
Barry	2 1
Perth	1 8
Sheshmore, East	1 8
„ West	1 7

Foot-note.

33. The last poor rate, made in September of the present year, only averaged 1s. 3d. for all purposes—ranging from a minimum of 1s. in the rural electoral division of Kilpatrick to 2s. 4d. in the town division of Wexford.

Seed Supply
Act.

34. There was no liability incurred in this Union under the Seed Supply Act of 1880.

Statistical
Department.

35. The statistics of pauperism at the present time and at the corresponding date of 1882 are as follows, viz.—

	1882.	1883.
Number in workhouse	880	655
Number on outdoor relief	815	710
Total	1,695	1,365
General average cost of main- tenance and clothing in work- house per week	3s. 4d.	3s. 6½d.

From these figures it will be observed that, while the total number in receipt of relief at the two periods which form the subject of comparison, is absolutely identical, there has been a substantial reduction, equivalent to about 23 per cent., in the number of workhouse inmates, while the weekly cost of maintaining them has, within the same time, fallen from 3s. 4½d. to 3s. 4d. per head.

Conclusion
of previous
chapter.

36. This concludes the preliminary observations I deemed it convenient to submit, and I shall now proceed to deal in the usual order with the several prescribed heads of my inquiry.

I.—THE SUPPLY OF LABOUR.

Sufficient
supply of
labour.

37. The supply of and demand for labour in this Union may be said generally to balance each other pretty fairly throughout the year.

In the seasons of spring and harvest time a dearth of labour is, no doubt, experienced in some districts; but this is now in a great measure remedied by the very common use of machinery in several operations which were formerly executed by manual labour.

Immigration.

38. There has been a distinct decrease in the supply during the past 10 or 15 years, owing to emigration; the diminution of the population noted in paragraph 6 being, there can be no doubt, largely attributable to the numbers of this particular class who have left the country during the periods indicated.

Immigrants
from.

39. There is no immigration of workers here experienced during any season.

Efficiency of
labourers.

40. It is rather generally complained that the labourers are not now at all so efficient as formerly—in part owing to the fact that the best are those who have left the country, and partly because those remaining are said to be more lost to the interests of their employers than in past years.

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As compared with other districts of the country there is, probably, not very much difference to be noted in the case of Wexford Union.

R. H.
WEXFORD.

II.—CONTRACTS OF ENGAGEMENT.

41. The employment in this Union is for the most part fairly continuous, and the hiring is usually by the week or year. In some districts it is complained by the labourers that, in the winter time, constant work cannot be procured, but this is certainly the exception, not the rule, and I have no doubt that in this respect the labourers generally are far more favourably circumstanced here than I have found to be the case in any of the five Unions previously inquired into by me.

42. The hours are usually from 6 a.m. to 6 or 7 p.m. in summer, and in winter from daylight to dark, with an allowance of from one and a-half to two hours for meals.

In some cases these limits may be slightly exceeded, and some of the labourers estimated by me complained that in practice they were rarely allowed by the farmers time enough to swallow their food.

Speaking generally, the period of labour appears to be from 10 to 11 hours daily in summer, and about two less in winter time.

43. Sunday labour is confined, as a rule to resident servants, and to such work as circumstances render indispensable.

Empho-
ment.Hours of
labour.Sunday
labour.

III.—WAGES AND EARNINGS.

44. The rates of wages vary somewhat in different localities, but the general scale ranges from 10s. to 15s. per week, without food, for men, and 4s. to 5s. for women and boys. Where food (three meals) is also given—and in this Union it may be said to be the general rule, except in the case of large farmers and the resident gentry—the rate given ranges from 2s. 6d. to 5s. per week. It may, I think, be assumed that the most general rates allowed are 5s. without food, and 4s. when the labourer is lodged; resident farm servants 10s. to 12s. all round. Some of the labourers who are permanently employed receive allowances in the shape of a free house on the employer's land, milk, fuel, or a piece of potato ground. Such allowances as these are, however, I apprehend, exceptional, not the rule, but it is the general practice to give all permanent labourers a bonus of from 15s. to 25s. on the close of harvest work, in which case bands usually called in receive either 1s. a day with food, or from 2s. to 3s. 6d. a day without diet.

45. There is not much in the way of piecework to be noted here, but, in some districts, I am informed a labourer occasionally earns about 1½ a week at such jobs as faggot cutting, cleaning up ditches, making sowers, and turning head lands, &c.

46. The general annual rate of earnings may be stated as follows—

	£ s. d.
Ordinary labourers, without food	22 8 to 26
„ „ with food	19 8 „ 22
Skilled labourers, without food	26 0 „ 33
„ „ with food	18 0
Resident farm servants	8 0 „ 12

47. The actual earnings of women and boys it is not easy to estimate, their employment being intermittent and casual, rather than continuous; but the receipts from these sources are nevertheless here of a substantial character, the wives of the labourers in this Union being so far as I could judge, considerably more helpful and hard-working in turning such resources as are open to them to good practical account than any others that I have yet come into contact with.

IV.—COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.

48. The Board of Guardians of this Union have set a good example to other similar public bodies by the manner in which they appear to have applied themselves to the duty of exercising the powers conferred upon them under the provisions of the several Labourers' Acts, 1862 to 1891.

The number of cottages already erected and occupied by labourers in this Union is 258, beside which a

Footings of
labourers' /
wivesAction by
Board of
Guardians.Guardians' /
cottages.

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3.-VI.
WEXFORD.

provisional order has been obtained for 15 more, and a fresh scheme, providing for a further addition of about 60 is now in course of preparation. When the entire number, 375, is available, there will, probably, not remain a great many labourers, in any district of the Union, not fully accommodated in regard to house accommodation.

I have visited as many of these already in use as were conveniently accessible to me.

34. They are, in far as I could judge, fairly disposed, and properly constituted, and, in regard to the internal accommodation afforded by them, they are the most commodious and best adapted to meet the exigencies of large families that I have as yet met with.

They each consist of two stories and four apartments, which are all of the same, owing to the judicious arrangement made here of extending the loft over the entire length of the building, a plan, the adoption of which would have entirely obviated some of the strongest grounds of complaint urged on my attention in other places that I have visited.

35. I was informed that the entire cost of the sites and buildings, &c., did not exceed 100*l.* per cottage, which must be considered moderate, under the circumstances.

36. They are let to the labourers at 1*l.* a week, and I was glad to learn that this rent is paid with, on the whole, remarkable punctuality.

37. The house accommodation of these labourers who have not hitherto been so fortunate as to secure Union cottages, is, in so far as it is based, to a large extent but very indifferent. These houses are partly dispersed over the farms, and in part concentrated in the villages, they usually consist of only one or two apartments, and are built with mud walls and thatched roofs, which are not uncommonly in a bad state of repair.

They are usually superadded with land or gardens of any sort, and are let at rents ranging from 6*l.* to 8*l.*, and 1*l.* per week.

In some few instances, however, I observed, in driving through the Union, some excellent specimens of labourers' houses, which, as I understand, had been erected by the owners of the property on which they stood.

40. At almost every station visited by me labourers appeared before me to complain of their present house accommodation, and urge the necessity for the erection of more Union cottages, with this, I may say, now never failing additional demand that the land attached should be increased from a half to a full acre—a question into the merits of which I have entered so fully in my recent report on Cusack Union, that it appears to be unnecessary that I should further refer to it on the present occasion.

V.—GARDENS AND ALLOTMENTS.

41. There is attached to each Union cottage the substantial half acre of land, which appears to be usually applied, as intended, to the purpose of providing potatoes and vegetables for the labourer's family, but complaints are urged that this cannot be done every year in succession, in the same patch, and this is commonly met by the strongest argument in favour of increasing the quantity to the much desired acre.

42. Except as just described, no allotments are to be anywhere met with under the provisions of Section 16 of 48 & 49 Vict. cap. 77, and Section 12 of 49 & 50 Vict. cap. 38.

43. In some other Unions the labourers are able without much difficulty, to obtain from the neighbouring farmers, either merely in consideration of their manuring the ground, or for this, and a specified rent in addition, a plot of potato ground; but this practice appears to obtain very little in Wexford Union, and may be said to be confined to certain cases in which a small privilege of this sort is allowed by farmers to their own permanent labourers—to the limited extent of sowing for them a few drills of potatoes—about 20 perches, using for the purpose the manure collected by the labourer near his cabin.

44. There are no cow-runs, cow-pens, or cow-pastures to be noted in any part of this Union, and the live stock kept by the labourers may be said to be strictly confined to pigs and fowls. Wexford, it may be observed, is famous for the rearing of every variety of the latter, and there is no doubt that the close attention

obviously given by the labourers' wives here to this branch of domestic industry has proved an important element in the additions they are able to make to their small resources.

VI.—BENEFIT SOCIETIES.

45. There are no benefit societies of any kind in this Union.

VII.—TRADES UNIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

46. Some short time since there were labour leagues established in different districts of Wexford Union, but they have been in recent times gradually dying out, and during my visit I only met with two which are still in active existence, viz. one at Tagash, and the other at Lady's Island, both situated in the south-eastern extremity of the Union, where I visited on the 11th instant, and took the opportunity of obtaining the evidence of the president, the secretary, and each of the other members of these organisations as were willing to meet me there for the purpose.

47. I had previously examined the secretaries of the now discontinued leagues of Wexford and Newtown—both remarkably intelligent men—and I am bound to say that in no single instance did I find the slightest tendency either to exaggerate facts, or urge unreasonable or impracticable demands on the part of the several representatives of these organisations that gave evidence before me.

VIII.—GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED.

48. The relations in this Union between the labourers and their employers are reported to be upon the whole fair, but there are qualifications of this state of things to be noted in some districts, and the following extract from a report received by me from a constabulary sergeant in charge of one of the stations I visited, may be probably accepted as a tolerably accurate representation of what may be assumed to be a by no means uncommon case in this connection.

He says as to this—

"The general feeling between employers and employed is not of a very strained character, but the labourers on the whole believe that they are badly treated by the farmers, both with regard to the amount of wages paid them, and hours for work."

"It is a fact beyond dispute that the farmers try to get as much work from the labourers as they can, while the labourer tries to pass the time with as much ease to himself as circumstances permit."

IX.—THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

49. As compared with the state of things in existence here ten or fifteen years back, there is, I think, no room to doubt that the general condition of the agricultural labourer has within this period undergone a decided improvement in the Union of Wexford.

There has not been here at all the same reduction in the extent of tillage farming that has been experienced with such telling effect on the condition of the agricultural labourers in many of the other parts of Ireland, while the large emigration that has taken place, as indicated in paragraph 6, has had its natural effect, of course, in creating a greatly increased demand for the labour of those still remaining in the country.

Owing to the combined operation of these two causes the complaints met with so commonly on the part of labourers in other places as to the want of continuous employment throughout the entire year are here, comparatively few, while the liberal provision made by the Board of Guardians in connection with the erection of cottages for the accommodation of this class, and the substantial decrease that has concurrently with this taken place in the cost of most of the prime necessities of their lives could not fail to result in a considerable amelioration of their general condition.

50. As bearing on this last element of improvement in the labourer's position, I may here quote the contract

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER

General and
Joint
Inspector

Wexford and
Down
Union.

Evidence.

Compared
with former
state.

Cottages.

Employment.

Union
cottages
Cost of provisions.

Contract
price of
provisions.

THE
UNION
OF
LABOURERS.

prices paid for the principal articles of food in use in the workhouse in 1872 and 1882 respectively, viz.—

	Contract Prices.		1872		1882.	
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Flour, per bag, 36 stone -	1	2	5	1	14	5
Meat, per lb. -	0	0	1½	0	0	7½
Lard or tallow, per cwt. -	0	6	9	0	8	0
Onions, per cwt. -	0	12	6	0	13	1½
Potatoes, per stone -	0	0	4	0	0	4
Buttermilk, per gallon -	0	0	3	0	0	3
Sweet milk " " -	0	0	6	0	0	7
Tea, per lb. -	0	1	6	0	2	8
Sugar " " -	0	0	2	0	0	2
Rice, per stone -	0	1	7	0	4	8
Rice, per lb. -	0	0	9	0	0	11
General average cost of maintenance and clothing per week -	0	3	4	0	3	6½

FUTURE PLANS.

These figures represent a very real reduction in the present weekly outlay for food of a large family as contrasted with that of 10 years ago, while the families now enjoyed by a large portion of the labourers for the production of potatoes and vegetables for their own use, on the plots attached to their holdings, have, it need not be said, still further improved their position in this respect in a very material degree.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER DISTRICTS.

51. These observations refer only to the relative condition of the labourers now and formerly in Wexford Union; it remains that I should next compare it with that at the present time enjoyed by the same class in other districts of the country.

MONEY WAGES.

Where the labourers are remunerated entirely by money wages the rates in all the Unions as yet visited by me may be said to range from 8s. to 12s. a week, but passing over exceptional cases in both directions, 8s. and 12s. may be regarded as the rates usually paid to the ordinary class of labourers, and to this rule Wexford substantially presents no exception.

WAGES PAID IN OTHER DISTRICTS.

It is everywhere the practice to pay some labourers partly in money wages, and partly in diet, and where this course is followed the usual rate ranges from 4s. to 8s., but 6s. may be taken to be the standard most commonly observed.

In regard to this class of labourers, however, Wexford presents, in two most important respects, a rather marked contrast to anything hitherto coming under my notice.

In some other Unions I have found the existence of this class to be more the exception than the rule—the arrangement being chiefly, I apprehend, adapted in cases where the labourer has to travel a considerable distance to and from the sphere of his daily work, but in Wexford Union, on the contrary, it may be said to be the almost invariable practice adopted—except by farmers of the largest class, and by the resident gentry—while the scale of wages allowed in these cases, though ranging from 8s. 6d. to 5s. a week, does not, as a rule, exceed, I think, 4s., and is certainly nowhere on the average over 4s. 6d.

SCALE OF WAGES.

It is right to add that the diet allowed by the Wexford farmers to their labourers in these cases appears to be a liberal one—and is, probably, value for 5s. or 6s. a week, thus, in effect, bringing the rate of remuneration up to very much what the general standard is, so far as the cost to the employer is concerned.

52. Under these circumstances it is exceedingly difficult to understand how a practice, so obviously, and so seriously disadvantageous to a class of the labourers as have families dependent on them, could have ever met with the general acceptance it appears to have found

here—nor could anyone that I referred to on the subject afford me any clear or satisfactory explanation of the matter.

Neither could any one—and I put the question to several witnesses of practical experience—explain to me how it was possible for a labourer having a wife and four or five children dependent on him to support them, under existing conditions, with any approach to comfort on wages of only 5s. or even 6s. a week. In reply to this inquiry it was admitted by one and all that they "could not understand how it was done."

53. The true solution of the problem is, I believe, to be looked for in the fact that the labourers' wives are better, as I have already had occasion to remark, quite exceptionally industrious, and undertake an amount of farm work altogether unknown at other places, beside adding industriously to their family resources by the successful prosecution of such small domestic industries as the rearing and feeding of pigs, poultry, &c.

EVIDENCE OF WIVES.

54. The necessity thus imposed on the labourers' wives of seeking external employment is, however, attended with, as it appears to me, some serious drawbacks, in certain cases.

In one cottage that I visited I found in the labourer's wife and five little children—the two eldest being girls of apparently from 9 to 12 years of age—and, in reply to my inquiry as to how they were cared for during her own absence at farm work, &c., she informed me that she had to keep the two eldest girls of the number from school, to look after the others, and, in the course of my inquiry several witnesses, I may add, stated to me that another effect of the arrangement I am now dealing with was that the labourers' children had to be, as a rule, withdrawn permanently from school, for the purpose of going out to service with the farmers, and so relieving their families of the cost of supporting them at home.

DRAWBACKS ATTENDING EMPLOYMENT OF WIVES.

EVIDENCE.

55. With these preliminary explanations as to the general condition of the agricultural labourers in this Union I shall now proceed to submit, in further elucidation of the subject, extracts from some of the evidence obtained by me on this particular point.

56. A witness of great experience, and having a very intimate acquaintance with the question throughout the entire Union says as to this:—

EVIDENCE.

"If each competent labourer were provided with a cottage and plot of land (half a statute acre) under the Labourers (Ireland) Acts, and if his wages were increased by two shillings a week the lot of the labourers in this Union would not be an unhappy one"; and he further observed with respect to one particular, and by no means inconsiderable class of labourers, as follows:—

"There is a class called 'servant boys,' who have from 10s. to 12s. a year with their support and lodging the whole year round. These have 'occasionally' nothing to complain of, except perhaps the 'lodge' might be a little better looked after. It is this class, unfortunately, of free able strapping fellows who usually emigrate."

57. An experienced ex-officio guardian of the Union, who takes an active interest in all matters of local administration, says on this subject:—

EX-OFFICIO GUARDIAN.

"Taking into consideration the price of flour, and, as it was twenty years ago the labourer holds a most favourable position at the present time."

"I sold wheat in 1874 for 37s. the 20 stone."

" " " 1875 " 37s. " "

" " " 1877 " 38s. " "

"The present price of wheat is 35s. the 20 stone."

"Oats were selling in the above years at from 12s. to 12s. for 14 stone. The present price of oats is 8s. 10d. the 14 stone. I pay the same wages now as I did twenty years ago."

"I consider the agricultural labourer should be paid either in money, or in part money and food and fuel so that all his earnings should go to his home for the support of his family."

"There is a great want of the simplest knowledge of cookery among the women, and I consider that some means of teaching cookery should be adopted at the national schools."

58. A resident proprietor, in the vicinity of Wexford, says, under this head:—

"Where a man or a family are in receipt of constant work their condition never was better. In the dark times their wages were raised from 7s. to 8s. a week. All necessary food and clothing."

RESIDENT PROPRIETOR.

B-VI.
WEXFORD.

"ing are far cheaper than formerly. Generally American bacon forms an item of diet where fish was hardly ever tasted before. Instead of 'lackey and Indian meal straight and groats' also being made at home, bread made all round the country regularly and householder's bread at all the houses.

"The Wexford fowl commands a very high price— from 2s 6d to 3s 6d a couple in summer, and up to 7s. a couple in winter and early spring. All cottagers rear fowls.

"If a labourer is out of work of course he becomes a pauper, but, except a man being as idle or sickly, every man can find work."

To add—

"The mass of machinery and the general impotence of the poorer classes have utterly ruined the shillings and capabilities of the labourers. If an employer wants a handy man to stack, hatch, make baskets, the best and younger men will simply leave, as they can get employment elsewhere.

"The old men are the only hands on a farm capable of doing hardy work."

Secretary
of the
Labour
League.

50. The Secretary of the Labour League at Taggart, in the north-eastern extremity of the Barony of Forth, says—

"I suppose there are about 250 labourers in this district."

"Some are occasionally out of work. I have known five or six about me to be idle, and at other times there might be a score idle in the district, this might be for a month. This is owing to a want of work. About one-quarter only of the land here is under tillage.

"As a rule the wages are 6d a day—some more, some less—with food, some for six days and some for seven days. When paid all in money it is 5s. to 10s. and 12s., but the general rule is to pay in food and money, except the very large farmers and the gentry.

"The houses of the labourers are some of them very bad, hardly fit for habitation, and they generally pay about 6d. or 8d. a week for them; no land attached.

"There is no one sore in this district.

"About 6d. a week is spent by the labourers on tobacco.

"The wives here are very industrious. They work on the farms, and keep poultry and pigs.

"I could not consider the condition of the labourers to be very fair, it is almost impossible for them to live fairly. More cultivation of the soil would be the chief thing to improve the condition of the labourer.

"I consider the wages should be increased to 1s. a day, with 2d. for a good labouring man.

"I think more Union cottages are required. Some have terribly bad houses.

"I consider it would be better by far for the labourer—except when he had to go a long distance to his work—to be paid entirely in money, instead of partly in food."

Ex-sec-
retary of the
Wexford
Labour
League.

51. Mr John Brown—a remarkably intelligent man—now secretary of the Corporation Waterworks, and formerly secretary of the Wexford Labour League, says—

"I am now caretaker of the Corporation Waterworks, but have followed labouring all my life. I was secretary of the Wexford Labour League up to 1883, when it died out here. My local knowledge extends to the electoral divisions of Wexford, Forth, Carrick, Kildine, and Glan.

"There are a considerable number of agricultural labourers in all these districts. About three-fourths of these are got constant employment, and the other one-fourth cannot. I would put the time for which they cannot get work at three months of the year.

"The general rate of wages is from 3s to 5s. a week, with three meals, for either six or seven days, according to the class of work. 4s. is about the general average.

"The generosity of the labourers are renowned men; some have free cottages for certain work from the farmers.

"The food of the labourers' families is wheatear, and consists of Indian meal straight and butter-milk.

"The wives are half the support by their earnings, and keeping fowls.

"Less than one-fourth of the labourers are paid entirely by money wages—5s. to 9s. a week. In rare cases the farmers give them, if they have measure, a peck of potato ground.

"The majority are in a bad state as to houses; they generally pay 6d. to 1s. a week—no land.

"I consider the labourers cannot have 1s. a day— that 3s, 12s. a week—without sick, they cannot do as less."

52. The Constabulary reports under this particular head of inquiry very a good deal, as might be anticipated, with the different districts to which they bear reference.

Some represent the general condition of the labourers to be either "good" or "fair," while others describe it as "poor;" but I give here some extracts from reports in which the question is answered more in detail.

Thus the sergeant in charge of an important station situated in the west of the Union says as to this—

"Those who are housed in cottages built by the Board of Guardians are fairly well off, but the others who are not so provided are in a bad condition."

Another sergeant, stationed in the northern section of the Union, says—

"The general condition of the agricultural labourer is not satisfactory. The wages paid in cases where the labourer has a wife and four or five children to support are inadequate, and they should, in many cases, have better cottage accommodation. A greater number of Union cottages should be built, and I would recommend that an acre should be attached thereto, on the ground of rotation of crops."

One further quotation as to this will suffice.

Another sergeant, writing from the west of the Union, says—

"The general relations between employers and employed are friendly, though the general condition of the labourer is poor, the wages being low and houses accommodation inferior."

"The rate of weekly wages during the preceding 12 months has been from 4s. to 4s 6d. per week."

"The method of payment adopted in harvest is to give each labourer a bonus of 12. at the end of the season and nothing extra at any other time."

"There are no wages earned here in any other occupation."

53. Though this district is mainly an agricultural and pastoral one, there are, nevertheless, some more or less important industries of a different character to be noted in connection with it.

54. At Dringagh, about three miles south of Wexford, there are extensive works for the manufacture of Portland cement, lime burning, and quarrying, &c.

These works afford employment in the different departments to from 90 to 120 hands throughout the year, and the wages earned range from 10s. to 18s. a week, piece-work men realising from 10s. to 30s. and skilled mechanics from 18s. to 26s.

The operations connected with these works represent a large annual output, the commercial value of which must be considerable. I failed to obtain the precise particulars, but it would probably exceed 40,000.

55. The making industry is here considerable.

At Castlebridge, a village about three miles to the north-east of Wexford, from 17,000 to 18,000 lambs are reared annually on commission for Messrs. Guinness & Co., of Dublin, affording employment for about eight months of the year to—

25 malsters at 14s. a week;

15 labourers at 5s. to 12s.; and

12 ordinary labourers at 9s. to 12s.

Some of these get, also, free houses and potato ground, and about half the number are retained during the summer, when the remaining half avail themselves of the ordinary agricultural work of the district.

In addition to this establishment there are in the town of Wexford five firms who prepare malt on their own account, employing altogether about 160 hands in the season, at wages ranging from 10s to 16s., and averaging probably about 14s.

56. The cattle raising of this Union is mainly directed to the rearing and fattening of dry stock and sheep, but dairy farming is also pursued to a certain extent.

Yas
Agriculture
Labourers

Food of
labourers

Provision of
labourers
paid partly
in food

State of
work a
labourer

Condition
labourer

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THE
TOWN OF
WEXFORD
LABOURERS—
Continued.

The butter is, for the most part, made at the respective farms, and disposed of in the local market at Wexford, but there is one creamery, at a place called Clonard, a few miles to the south-west of Wexford, with an auxiliary branch at the neighbouring town of Taghmon, where the milk is received and separated, the cream being then sent to Clonard, where alone butter is made.

The operations to be noted under this head are, however, limited in extent.

The total quantity of milk received at both branches during the past year was 106,334 gallons; the number of hands employed in it, and the average weekly wages paid in connection with them are under 34.

Types of
Kiln.

36. The town of Wexford, situated on the south side of the estuary of the river Slaney, and having now a population of 11,545 as against 12,161 in 1882, is most favourably placed for purposes of general commerce, in regard to geographical position, but the advantages that would be otherwise derivable from this source have been, in a great measure, marred by the existence of a bar at the mouth of the harbour, which only allows a depth of 12 feet of water at high tide. A vigorous local attempt, aided by a government loan, has been in recent years made to surmount this natural impediment, by the construction of a line of railway to Rosslare, at a point on the South Bay of Wexford, some nine or ten miles distant, and the construction there of a deep water harbour.

But for
the bar.

Wexford and
vicinity of
Rosslare.

The railway, though not now regularly used, has been finished for some years, but the harbour works still remain in an incomplete condition, and though a very considerable amount of capital has been already sacrificed in connection with the scheme there appears to be, I regret to think, but a slender prospect at the present time of any further progress being made with this undeniably most important undertaking.

Wexford
navigation.

37. Notwithstanding the great obstacle to its prosperity just noted, the town of Wexford may, upon the whole, be described as a fairly busy and thriving one—having, in addition to the sailing industry already described, several others, all more or less important in their way.

Iron
industries.

There are two foundries for the manufacture of agricultural machines and farming implements.

They conjointly employ about 130 hands, who receive weekly wages of, on an average, about 18s. each.

Wax and
cork
industries.

There are two saw mills and cork factories, employing about 30 hands, at weekly wages averaging about 25s. each.

Cabinet
making.

There is a good deal of cabinet and shanty furniture making also carried on here, this work employing some 13 to 15 hands, with wages at about 25s. each.

Carp
and
joinery.

A ship pipe manufacture has been recently established in the town—it is said to be so far doing well, but time has not yet admitted of any reliable estimate of its profit being made.

In
weaving,
dyeing,
and
string
in a mill.

There are finally to be noted, amongst the local industries of the town, a brewery, a distillery, and two steam corn mills; but I have not succeeded in obtaining any definite details as to the precise extent of the operations connected with them.

Fisheries.

The fishing industry, though not very considerable in any part of Wexford Union, is still of sufficient importance to call for some special notice here.

Fishing
industry.

The herring fishery is pursued from September to February, but only in fine weather—it employs about Wexford, Carno, Rosslare, and Curraghmore, about 41 or 42 boats in all—each having four hands. It is stated that these boats have been known to earn in the season as much as 120s., and as little as 30s.

Wexford
fishery.

Oysters are only obtained in small quantities, but the flavor is said to be very fine, and they sell at 3d. each. Some 10 or 12 Wexford boats only find employment in this branch in the season—September to April.

Wexford
fishery.

The salmon fishery employs, at Ferrysbeg and Kiltierny, about 16 or 18 boats during the season—17th March to 30th September. In good years these boats realize as much as 150s. each, but, at other times, it is stated, only a bare subsistence.

Wexford
fishery.

In addition to these branches of the industry, there are about 10 or 15 boats employed at Kilmore in the southern extremity of the Union, in long line and deep sea fishing—the latter taken in that quarter being of exceptionally good quality.

Wexford
fishery.

These boats, and some five or six at Bannock, are likewise employed, at the proper season, in fishing for mackerel. Except as just enumerated there are no other industries of this class to be noted in any part of the Union.

R.—V.L.
Wexford
Union.
Mackin, I.

38. The ownership of property in Wexford Union is a good deal divided, there being no single estate of very considerable or exceptional extent.

Distribution
of estates.

There are in all some 19 or 20 principal proprietors of the soil, of whom rather more than one-half reside in their estates, the rest either in England, or in other parts of Ireland.

Distribution
of estates.

39. The cottages built by the Board of Guardians appear to have been judiciously disposed of, so far as I could observe, over the surface of the country, and the labourers inhabiting them appear to be, in consequence, conveniently situated with respect to distances from their work. The others either reside on the farms, or are concentrated in the various towns and villages, and in these latter cases, of course, the labourers are not in this respect as favourably circumstanced as the others; but this disadvantage will be sensibly reduced, in regard to the numbers that are at present affected by it, as the fresh schemes for the erection of additional cottages now under consideration reach their final stage.

Distribution
of labourers.

X.—CONSUMPTION.

40. Having now brought to a close my detailed Report on the state of the typical Poor Law Union selected for investigation by me, with respect to the condition of the agricultural labourer, it only remains that I should here, as in all the previous ones, conclude with a few additional observations as to the general effect of the evidence obtained and of my own personal observations while engaged in the different districts of the Union.

Additional
remarks.

In no Union hitherto visited by me have I been as favourably impressed on the whole as here in regard to the general condition of the labourers and their families, with the one rather important exception on which I felt it necessary to dwell at some length under Head IX.

General
condition of
labourers
and their
families.

41. The arrangement in all but married practices in this Union, of paying by a small rate of money wages in combination with a rather liberal scale of diet for the labourers themselves, may be attended with advantage to the employers, by rendering the labourers better able to perform their work than if they shared the knacker fare provided for their families, and the attraction of this better description of food may tend in many cases to prevent the labourers themselves to the system, BUT AS REGARDING THE LABOURER'S FAMILIES, there can, it appears to me, be no doubt that the effect is bad, and always must be in the highest degree prejudicial.

The most
poorly
fed.

42. I have already taken occasion to remark that, in its purely financial aspect, the employers' expenditure in connection with the arrangement must be very much the same as if the ordinary rate was observed of paying entirely in money, and I drew this conclusion from the evidence given before me at Taghmon on the 15th inst. by the assistant secretary of the local labour league, who says as to this—

Cost of the
arrangement
in this
district.

"I consider it best for the labourer to be dieted than paid all in money—the labourers prefer the arrangement. The breakfast given by farmers is generally stout and milk, or bread and milk. No tea here, except in one case; dinner, meat two or three times a week—American meat with potatoes, butter, and bread, or potatoes and milk. At 4 o'clock they also get tea with bread."

But pro-
vided by
the
labourers.

43. In contrast with this scale of living, I have already quoted (paragraph 30) the evidence of ex-secretary John Brown as to that of the labourer's FAMILIES, which, it has been seen, he describes as "wretched, and consisting of Indian meal, stout, and buttermilk."

But of
labourers'
families.

I have likewise already observed upon the impossibility of a labourer with a wife and children dependent on him making any reasonable provision for their ordinary requirements out of wages such as have been deputed to as the current rate allowed in such cases, and thus, too, I deduce from the evidence of a very intelligent labourer as to his own disbursements, under certain almost indispensable heads of expenditures in the life of every labourer—

B.—VL
WILKINS.Necessary
items of
expenditure.

This labourer, Michael Tierney, says as to this —

"I calculate my own outlay thus. I have 10s. a week.
"I spend for rent, 1s.; tobacco, 6d.; milk, 1s.; coal,
"8d.; light, 4d.—that is 5s. 6d.—leaving 5s. 6d. for the
"support of the family of eight."

The only intelligible solution I have been able to reach as to how under these conditions the families of the labourers who only receive 4s. or 5s. in the shape of money wages contrive to exist at all, is that already adverted to in paragraph 53, and that is certainly not to be regarded as being in any sense at all a satisfactory one.

54. Individually, the labourer may fare better under this arrangement than he could otherwise expect to do, but he obtains this result only by imposing on his wife an entirely undue amount of outdoor employment, and too often also, it is to be feared, by depriving his children of the full measure of the education he is bound by every obligation to afford them.

Results of
system.

As stated in paragraph 44, numerous representations were made to me by the labourers as to the want of more Union cottages, with an acre of land attached in each case, but as it has been already explained how fully alive the Guardians of this Union have shown, and still show, themselves to these responsibilities in this particular, it does not seem to be necessary that I should enter further into that subject on the present occasion.

The
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER
—
More
cottages

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

W. P. O'BRIEN,

Assistant Commissioner.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

I R E L A N D.

R E P O R T

BY

MR. W. P. O'BRIEN, C.B.

(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER),

UPON THE

POOR LAW UNION OF LISMORE

(CO. WATERFORD).

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THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

TO GEOFFREY DRAKE, Esq., Secretary,
Royal Commission on Labour.

EXETER.

Marshdon, Co. Dublin,
24th January 1885.

SIR, I HAVE the honour to accept for the information of the Royal Commission on Labour that I arrived in Lismore Union on the 7th instant, and was there engaged during the ensuing three weeks in the prosecution of the usual inquiries into the conditions and circumstances under which the agricultural labourer lives and works in that district.

I attended the weekly meeting of the Board of Guardians on the 11th instant, and explained to the members present the nature and scope of the inquiry I was then prosecuting in the union. I at the same time specially invited their assistance and co-operation in furtherance of my purpose, and with this object furnished them with copies of the usual forms for their guidance and information.

I met upon all heads, I desire to say, with the utmost readiness to afford me every possible assistance and information, and I have especially to acknowledge the courtesy of the local agent of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire—the principal estate owner in the union—in placing at my disposal the services and valuable evidence of his chief assistants in the management of the property, and their prompt compliance with my request for the attendance of each of the labourers employed under them as I desired to see and examine in person.

To the clerk of the unions—an officer of much experience, and marked intelligence and judgment—I have likewise to express my very sincere sense of obligation for his cordial co-operation generally, and the great pains taken by him in promptly supplying me with statistical returns, and other information at my various requests.

While entering here to the course I have hitherto everywhere found it desirable to follow—of abstaining from converting anything in the shape of a general public meeting of either labourers or farmers—a course which, as I have already taken occasion to observe, would, in my opinion, under existing conditions in this country, be far more likely to prove productive of evil than good—I at the same time took the necessary steps to obtain at various local and convenient centres of population the attendance of the best representatives of both classes who were willing to meet me, and give evidence on the subject of my inquiry.

With this object I, in addition to Lismore itself, attended for the purpose of receiving evidence at Ballyhugh in the west of the union, Tallow and Killybegh in the south, Cappoquin in the east, and Ballinacorney and Mount Maloney in the north; and in each of these districts I availed myself, as far as practicable, of the opportunity of personally visiting the houses of the labourers, and learning from themselves, or more frequently from their wives, the views entertained by them as to the conditions of their lives, and their present situation generally.

The District Inspector and men of the Royal Irish Constabulary here, as usual, afforded me the most valuable help in the several localities visited by me, and, though it can only be a repetition of the similar testimony it has been my pleasing duty to bear in all the countries I have as yet been engaged in, I desire to offer them here, also, the expression of my best thanks for the assistance they so cheerfully, in every instance, afforded me.

In pursuance of my general practice in this respect I will, I think, be convenient that I should here, too, produce my detailed report on the several heads of inquiry with a few preliminary observations, explanatory of the general character and condition of the union.

7. The county of Wexford comprehends the entire of three poor law unions, and parts of five others. Lismore, situated in the western extremity of the county, comprises one of the former, and though it is not quite the most considerable of the number in regard to its population and extension at the present time, it greatly exceeds any of the others in the interest attaching to it, both on the ground of the attractiveness of its scenery, and the many traditions and associations that surround its past history.

It is bounded on the east by the union of Dungarven, on the south by that of Youghal, on the west by the union of Fermoy, and on the north by the union of Clonahere, situated in the north-western extremity of the County Tipperary, from which Lismore Union is separated by the lofty range of the Knockmalin Mountains.

It is divided into sixteen electoral divisions, and is an entirely inland district, but from the estuary of Youghal Harbour, in the south, up to the town of Cappoquin—a distance of some 16 to 18 miles—the River Blackwater is navigable, at high tides, by vessels drawing about 9 or 10 feet of water; and during the summer months a steamer now plies daily between these points for the convenience of the tourist trade, which is driven to the district both by the undoubted beauty of the surrounding scenery, and the additional attraction of the Abbey of Mount Maloney; an institution with a history so interesting and peculiar as to require a special reference to it here.

This abbey is situated about four miles due north of the town of Cappoquin, on the southern slopes of the mountain range of Knockmalin, at a height of about 700 feet above the sea level. It was founded in 1833 by a branch of the famous monastic order of the Trappes, who, on their expulsion from France after the revolution of 1830, established themselves here upon a barren mountain tract—about 700 acres in extent—of which they succeeded in obtaining a lease from the proprietor, Sir Richard Keane, at an annual rent of, I believe, 2s. 6d. the acre.

The land there acquired by them was then simply a bleak and almost valueless moor—largely interspersed, moreover, with rock and stones, &c.; but a visit to it at the present day will well repay the trouble of the journey, if only as a practical and instructive illustration of what patient and determined industry can achieve in overcoming natural obstacles, even of so formidable a character as those which confronted the settlers on their first establishment in this wild and most unpromising region.

Of the original tract of 700 acres obtained in 1833, some 400 have been in the interval thoroughly reclaimed, fenced, and brought under cultivation, and are at present thus distributed: under plantation, 90 acres; tillage, 75; dairy farming and the rearing of dry stock and sheep, 350; total, 500 acres; while the process of reclamation still goes on, and will, no doubt, eventually embrace the entire of the land in the possession of the brotherhood.

Concomitantly with this extensive reclamation of waste land, several ranges of substantial buildings, adapted to the various purposes of the community, and of considerable extent, have been also erected.

These buildings provide accommodation not only for the members of the Order—about 70 in number—but likewise for visitors, and for a large middle-class boarding-school—having at the present time over 100 pupils—as well as for free day schools for the children of the poorer classes in the vicinity, of whom about 180 boys and girls are now receiving not only the benefit of a good and reliable elementary education, but are,

R. VII.
Lismore.
—
Situation
and
boundaries
of Union.

Boundaries.

Abbey of
Mount
Maloney.

Original
condition
of the land.

Present
condition.

Buildings.

R.—Vill.
S.—House
—
Agriculture
paid labour.

also, supplied daily with their dinner meal by the brotherhood.

Through all the members of the Order, whether lay brothers or ordained clergymen, are required to work upon the land, they are not found sufficient for the management of so large a flock, and accordingly about 35 paid labourers are, I find, permanently employed upon it, receiving wages of from 2s. to 10s. weekly—wet and dry—six of the number are provided with free houses on the farm; in addition to which the children of all receive, as just described, periodical support at the schools, and other members of their families are, I am informed, likewise helped liberally in the same manner whenever they are in need of such assistance.

Disposal of
produce.

The produce of the land is all consumed in the institution, and in addition it is found necessary to buy, to a certain extent, supplies of hay, straw, mangolds, and turnips, &c.

Disposition
of culture by
the brother
hood.

It is not surprising that such an institution as this should possess a source of interest and attraction to numerous bodies of English and other visitors—who, it may be said, never fail to experience on such occasions the greatest kindness and hospitality for which the members of this remarkable Order have been at all times so well and so favourably known, whenever they have established themselves.

Statistics of
the Union.

9. The area of the entire union is 97,064 acres, which includes 15,631 acres under the head of bog, moorlands, waste, &c.; the Poor Law valuation is 58,414½; or about 12s. 3d. per acre, and 2s. 6d. per head of the population, which is now 15,114 as against 17,254 in 1841 and 18,827 in 1871—this being equivalent to a valuation in the present population of 2,130 or 15·3 per cent, and of 3,712 or nearly 26 per cent as compared with the returns for the two previous decades of 1841 and 1871 respectively.

Towns
included in
Union.

10. The union contains three towns, and one large village—viz., Lismore, population according to last census 1,622; Cappoquin, 1,566; Tallow, 1,088; and Ballydaff village, 141.

Lismore.

The town of Lismore, though manufacturing now in extent and population, is one of great antiquity, and was at one period, in its early history, conspicuous for the number of its monasteries, and its various religious and educational establishments.

It claims to possess notice at the present day rest, however, chiefly on the singular beauty of the surrounding scenery, and the interest attaching to its ancient cathedral and castle.

Lismore
Castle.

The latter, first erected in 1180 by King, then Prince, John, but subsequently destroyed and rebuilt, is a specially striking object of local interest, standing prominently out as it does, with its towers and battlements, on the verge of an eminence perpendicular to the banks of the River Blackwater—the waters of which wind immediately below it, through a valley of surpassing beauty, in a depth of some 60 feet or more from its base.

The Black-
water
River.

11. This river—sacredly known as the Avonmore, and, in modern days, sometimes styled “the Irish Rhine,”—occupies a prominent place amongst the rivers of Ireland, few of which can lay claim to the picturesque surroundings which mark its banks almost from its source in the eastern border of the County Kerry, through Mulline, Fenagh, and Lismore up to Cappoquin, where it forms an effluve, and by a sudden bend the south flows to the Harbour of Youghal, where it terminates—after running for a length of in all about 70 miles, from its rise to the point of its discharge into the sea—and after covering in its course the waters of several tributary streams of more or less importance. The principal of these is the River Bride—a stream of some local importance, and of about 24 miles in length—which, rising in the barony of Barrymore, in the east of the County Cork, discharges itself, after a peculiarly serpentine course, into the Blackwater, at a point between Cappoquin and Youghal Harbour.

The River
Bride.

12. With the exception of the extensive alluvial flats lying along the banks both of the Blackwater and the Bride, the general face of the country may be described as being uneven and hilly, and along the northern border it is wild and mountainous; the Knockakeelagh range, which constitutes the north-western boundary of the union, rising to the greatest height to over 2,900 feet above the sea-level.

Geological
formation.

13. The geological characteristics of the union are a good deal mixed, mainly consisting of old red sandstone,

and, in a secondary degree, of carboniferous limestone, but with a limited admixture of lower limestone shale in particular localities.

The
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURERS.

To the north of the Blackwater the formation consists exclusively of old red sandstone, but immediately south of the river a belt of carboniferous limestone is encountered, traversing the union from east to west to the width of from half to 2½ miles, when it is again succeeded by the old red sandstone formation, which thence extends to the southern extremity of the union, with a slight further admixture of limestone, which is met with to the south of the River Bride.

The soil.

14. The nature of the soil in different localities varies considerably in character and value.

In the action of the union lying north of the River Blackwater it is a great part of indifferent quality, and consists chiefly of white and red sand, the former being very stiff, unproductive, and difficult of cultivation, while the latter is softer and more easily handled.

To the south the land is much better, it consists for the most part of a light loam, dark in colour, and in some places of excellent quality, but along the banks of the Rivers Blackwater and Bride is encountered a gley alluvial soil of considerable value.

The following particulars, taken from the rate books, and showing the ratio of valuation to area in each of the four highest and four lowest rated alcoholic districts respectively in the union, will best illustrate the extent of the diversity just referred to, viz.:

No. 1.—INTERIOR SOIL.

Electoral Division.	Area.	Valuation.	Valuation Per Acre.
	Acres.	£.	s. d.
Ballycappamore	3,341	1,507	4 3
Ballyva	14,341	3,076	6 3
Ballydaff	6,789	1,172	5 3
Cappoquin	3,863	527	5 4

No. 2.—SEVERAL SOIL.

Electoral Division.	Area.	Valuation.	Valuation Per Acre.
	Acres.	£.	s. d.
Donmore	3,397	5,226	17 0
Kilteanmore, East	2,784	8,510	17 0
Clewinstown	7,234	5,282	10 0
Ballymore	6,568	5,368	14 3
Union Union	97,064	50,019	10 4

15. The farms in this union are, as a rule, of medium extent.

Size of
farms.

The total number of holdings is 4,538, which, being divided into the area and valuation, gives an average area of 21 acres, and 11s. 2d. valuation for each, but if the town ratings of Lismore, Tallow, and Cappoquin be excluded from the calculation, the number of rural holdings would be 2,003, and the area and valuation 26 acres and 14s. respectively.

From 40 to 50 acres would probably be about the general size, these being at the same time many small and some very large farms to be noted. In the north-west or mountain districts the average is, probably, 15 to 20 acres.

The qualification for a special juror in the county is 100s., and the number qualified under this head in Lismore Union is 67.

Qualified
jurors.

Common jurors require a valuation of 50s. in the county and 10s. in the towns, and under these heads there are 316 possessing the necessary qualification, thus giving a total of 283 who are entitled to act in these capacities, which is probably as ready a test as can be applied to indicate the general range of the ratings.

16. The farming pursued in this union is of a mixed character, comprising dairy, dry stock, and tillage; the two former, which appear to be, generally speaking, pretty equally divided, are entirely the predominant features, but there exists to be noted a fair extent of tillage, except in the wild and mountainous districts in

Types of
farming.

Theory and
dry stock
farming.

The
Agricultural
Labourer
in
the
Union

the northern section of the union, where the nature of the farming is described as "nearly all grazing," not more than 3 to 4 acres of tillage being met with even on holdings containing altogether 150 acres.

In the case of the Abbey Farm of Mount Mellery, however, which is situated in the north-western district, the tillage is about one-seventh of the entire, but this is, no doubt, exceptional about there.

In the other districts the proportion of tillage appears, generally speaking, to range from one-tenth to one-third, but in the extreme south of the union it is reported by the constabulary of the Kilsnooth station to be "more than one-third of the entire portion," in that quarter.

Substantiation
of
the
figures
of
the
tillage

17. Though the extent of tillage farming at present pursued in this union considerably exceeds what I have found in some other districts, there is no doubt that, as compared with the state of things existing 20 years ago, it has here, too, recently diminished—probably to about one-half—but no recent change of arrangement in this respect has taken place, and it is not improbable, in the opinion of some, that in the future it is quite as likely to increase as to further diminish.

Crops

The crops grown are chiefly potatoes, oats, turneps, mangolds, with some admixture of wheat and barley—not much of the latter, however.

Provisional
findings

18. In regard to the financial condition of a publican position, the union occupies a tolerably favourable position, upon the whole.

County
rate

19. The entire union is included within the area of the two baronies of Coolmore and Coshbride, and Decies without Drum, and the total population of the two last half-yearly assessments on these baronies was:—

	a. d.
Coolmore and Coshbride	2 10½
Decies without Drum	3 3½

But more than one-third of these acreages is, it is to be noted, payment of a railway guarantee.

Four years
to 1881

20. The last poor rate, made in September, averaged 2s., ranging from a minimum of 1s. 2d. in the electoral divisions of Mallow and Kilsnooth east, to a maximum of 2s. 6d. in Kilsnooth; but in addition to these rates for ordinary expenditure there were additional rates of 3d. each for special purposes, at the same time assessed on the towns of Cappoquin and Lismore and on the rural townlands.

Special
rates on
the
towns

There was a further liability of 996d. incurred by individual ratepayers under the Poor Law Act of 1861—of which one moiety has been cleared off, and the other, 996d., has not yet become payable.

Statistical
of
the
poor

21. The following are the statistics of pauperism at the present time and the corresponding period 10 years ago:—

	1869.	1882.
Average daily number in work-house	178	183
Ratio as outdoor relief	245	183
Total	423	366
General average cost per head weekly—poor rates and out-relief	2 8½	2 13½
Clothing	8	8½
Total	3 4½	3 8

From these figures it will be seen that, though the number relieved in the workhouse has slightly declined since 1869, the outdoor relief returns show, on the contrary, a rather substantial increase, but as it has been in previous reports pointed out, the extent of outdoor relief—which is unaccompanied by any test—is to be regarded rather as a measure of the liberality of the Board of Guardians than of the extent of actual destitution prevailing at any given date.

Continued
poor

22. I append herewith—marked A—a return showing the continued prices of the principal articles of consumption in the workhouse during the two years 1882 and 1883 respectively, and which it will be seen indicates a substantial decline in many important respects.

As a result of this it will be seen that the weekly cost of maintenance shows the substantial decline of 31 per cent between the dates quoted—a decrease which, it may be observed, would be more marked, but that, in the interval, the dietary of the workhouse was somewhat improved and increased.

A—The
Agricultural
Labourer
in
the
Union

23. This brings to a close the preliminary observations I considered it advisable to submit, and I shall now proceed to deal with each head of inquiry separately, following in doing so the order hitherto observed.

Class of
population
observed

I.—SUPPLY OF LABOUR.

24. As in the case of the last union reported on by me, Wexford, the supply of and demand for labour in this union throughout the year appears, upon the whole, to balance each other fairly enough, and there are not at all the same number of complaints heard here that have been in other unions addressed to me by lay-labourers as to the impossibility of their finding employment of any sort during more than half the year.

Weekly
relief

During the barren seasons of Spring, hay-time, and harvest a work of labourers, and especially of labourers possessing some general skill in their vocation, is, no doubt, complained of in certain districts, but any temporary difficulties of this kind are now almost everywhere sufficiently provided against by the modern use of agricultural machinery, and in this union there is a further resource in the wage which obtains here of the small farmers and their sons, who the adjoining mountain districts, offering themselves for hire in the neighbouring towns and villages, to which these who require additional hands are in the habit of resorting in search of them on these occasions.

Harvest
time, &c.

25. In the towns labourers are, no doubt, met with who are idle at the present season, and who complain that they cannot get employment, which is probably in a certain sense the case, but the answer usually given by reliable witnesses to such complaints is that the town labourers are, in a great measure, lay and inefficient workmen, and that they prefer casual jobs at high wages, such as can be obtained at high-pressure times, to constant and regular employment at moderate rates, such as farmers can afford to pay under present circumstances.

Town
labourers

Upon the whole, the evidence I have obtained on this subject leaves no doubt on my mind that if there are at the present time in Lismore Union any steady and fairly industrious and capable labourers who cannot obtain employment at moderate wages, the number can be reckoned a considerable one.

Unemployed

26. There has been here, as almost everywhere, a considerable decrease in the number of agricultural labourers resulting from emigration during the past 10 or 15 years.

Emigration

27. The only transmigration of labourers experienced here at any time is that just described, of the small farmers and their sons from the mountains to the neighbouring towns and villages of the union.

Transmigration

28. It is, I may say, an almost universal subject of complaint that the present labourers are greatly inferior to those of former times, both in point of efficiency and industry, the very best of the class being those who have left the country, and as to the staid justice of this complaint no doubt can, I think, be entertained.

Comparative
efficiency of
labourers

II.—CONSEQUENCES OF EMIGRATION.

29. The employment in this union is fairly constant and regular, though many labourers work from time to time with quite different employers; but the thing is in general, and altogether irrespective of this, only by the day or week, save in the case of resident farm "servant boys," who are usually hired by the quarter, half-year, or year.

Employment

30. The hours of labour usually observed are from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. in summer, and in winter daylight to dusk, with an allowance for meals ranging from 1½ to 2 hours.

Hours of
labour

As a rule the hours of labour would probably be 10 in the summer and 8 in the winter as regards the ordinary labourers, whether constantly or only casually employed; but in the case of resident farm servants no very strict rule is, probably, followed in this particular.

31. No work is performed by the labourers on Sundays except such as the nature of their employment may partially render indispensable, as in the case of men in care of cattle or horses.

Sunday
labour

the summer time; in winter it would, I fear, be found too cold for the purpose, being roofed with corrugated iron.

43. These included in the second scheme—60 in number—have, in addition, a loft extending over the living room, and all have the usual adjuncts of a pigsty and closet outside.

They are let to the occupiers at a rent of 10d. weekly, which certainly cannot be regarded as being, under the circumstances, at all an unreasonable or excessive one, although both here and elsewhere labourers frequently allege that the amounts charged in these cases are disproportionate to their earnings—which they consider do not admit of their paying more than 6d. a week under the head of house rent.

I visited as many of these houses as were conveniently accessible to me when driving through the manor. Their general condition and management were, in several instances coming under my notice, fairly satisfactory, but in some cases the approaches to them were still in a rough and rather incomplete state, and strong complaint was made by the occupants as to the discomfort experienced from smoking chimneys and other structural defects—such as dampness in the walls, and the want of rendering in the slating, &c.

44. On this subject the medical officer of the Tallow district, who is also the consulting sanitary officer for the entire union, has communicated to me the following important observations: He says:—

"I consider some of the labourers' cottages built in this manor to be of an inferior class—as regards design, construction, and quality of materials used—and in many instances the sites were badly chosen from a sanitary point of view, the quality of the land, and convenience of locality. In a number of cases I can state from personal observation that the houses are almost uninhabitable, owing to defective chimneys and dampness of the walls, in certain seasons.

"In almost every case, the approaches to the houses and the general surroundings are bad.

"During the building of the houses the contractors were not prevented from using the stones that formed the fosse in front of the plot, thereby leaving the fence in a dilapidated condition and without being compelled to make it good.

"Owing to the unfinished state in which the houses were certified by the board's engineer and allowed to be occupied by the labourers, it has been very difficult for them to keep their dwellings in a neat and sanitary condition.

"Each house should be provided with a new wall or fence in front and a gate entrance.

"Half an acre of land is, in my opinion, sufficient for each cottage.

"The number of cottages in this district is not sufficient, and there are families still living in cottages that are unfit for human occupation—I can recall to mind some such places that consist of only one apartment, and some have neither chimney or window, the smoke of the fire when lighted finding an exit through the door.

"In a few instances houses that were condemned as unfit for human occupation, and to replace which cottages were built, have been allowed to be re-occupied by the families.

"The defects here indicated must, it is obvious, seriously affect the comfort and convenience of those occupying the cottages referred to, and coming, as the statement does, from a responsible public official, whose position gives him peculiar facilities of information on the subject, it appears to deserve the careful consideration of those in whose hands the remedy lies.

45. In addition to the cottages erected by the Board of Guardians, as just described, a considerable number and of a substantial description have been also built in and about the towns of Lismore and Tallow by the owner of the estate, whose clerk of works thus states the particulars:—

"I am clerk of works for going on 30 years on the Duke's estate. I design and build all the houses on the estate.

"On the Duke's estate in Lismore Union, there are about 50 labourers' houses that I have built and improved within the last 20 years, and there must be many others built previously. They are all slated houses, two bedrooms, kitchen, and left over bedrooms about 15 by 9, and the bedrooms 9 by 8 and by 7.

"They have each a pigsty, cow-house, and privy. They have no land attached worth talking of, they get potato ground from the farmers whose land the cottages is on. The general rent is 1s. to 1s. 6d. per week in the country.

46. "There are a good many labourers' houses in the towns of Lismore and Tallow. I don't know the number, they have small gardens, and pay 1s. 6d. a week on an average; these are larger and better houses than those in the country, and are not confined to the Duke's labourers."

47. In the town of Cappoquin I also observed a range of excellent working men's cottages, built, I believe, by the owner of the property, Sir Richard Keane, but in this case I was not able to ascertain full particulars.

48. As all the farmers keep, as a rule, one or two reading servants of the class known as "farm boys," except those of the smaller type, who do their own work, the labourers coming under this head constitute at the present time a rather important body.

As regards diet and wages they have certainly no valid ground for complaint, but it is sometimes said that in regard to sleeping accommodation they are rather roughly treated.

They usually sleep either in the kitchen, or in the loft connected with them, or in out-offices or lofts over the latter.

It is probably true that their accommodation in this respect is often indifferent enough, but the farmers themselves are not always particularly well lodged either, and it is probable that their own case do not, generally speaking, fare at all better than the labourers, who, it may I think be safely assumed, would not, under existing conditions, submit to anything like exceptional ill-treatment in regard to this.

49. I will close my observations under this important head of inquiry with a few brief quotations from the evidence of three very competent witnesses having special knowledge of the subject dealt with by them.

The first of these says:—

"I am deputy county surveyor for the last 22 years, and have the whole of Lismore Union.

"The class of labourers' houses in the country districts is wretched. They generally pay 1s. a week, little or no land attached, only one room in many cases, some have two or three; there is a decided want of more union cottages."

The second witness says on the same subject:—

"I am relieving officer for 9 of the 14 electoral divisions in the manor. I have been relieving officer for nine years. There are 81 or 82 of the union cottages that have been built, situated in my district.

"The labourers who have not union cottages have very poor homes, spread throughout the country and in the villages, they generally pay 1s. a week, little or no ground, and have generally only one room."

The third witness referred to here, as regards his own district, much more favourable testimony on this point, he says:—

"I have been relieving officer here for six years, I have seven electoral divisions in my district. There are 35 union cottages included in my district. I collect the rents monthly and they are paid pretty fairly. I have only rarely to call a second time.

"The general house accommodation of the labourers in my district is very good, hardly a thatched house to be seen, they are generally on the farmers' lands. They pay about 50s. a year, and have gardens, less than half-an-acre. They can all get comestibles from the farmers, they pay about 15s. for one quarter acre and manure themselves."

50. The difference observable in these estimates of the travelling officers is, in part, accounted for by the fact that the district of the first inquirer, as a rule, the worst and poorest portions of the union; but though, owing to these circumstances, a much more favourable state of things may be found in the second case, the result of my own inquiries and observation would tend me to subscribe for "very good," the expression used by the relieving officer, "fair," or, perhaps, "satisfactory," as conveying a far more accurate representation of the actual state of the facts in the electoral divisions comprehended in his district, and it has been seen that the deputy county surveyor, whose evidence and experience of 22 years cover the entire union, makes no qualification as to any particular locality, in his general statement as

R.—VII.
Lismore.

Improved
Tallow.

Cappoquin.

Class of
"Farm
boys."

Best and
wages.

Lodging.

Evolution.

Deputy
county
surveyor.

Relieving
officer.
No. 1.

Relieving
officer.
No. 2.

Condition of
land and
quality of
polling
officers.

Deputy
county
surveyor's
evidence.

II.—VII. LAND. to the unfavorable condition of the houses in the country districts.

V.—GARDENS AND ALLOTMENTS.

Land attached to cottages. 53. Beyond the statutory half-acre attached in all cases to the Guardians' cottages there has been little or no recent increase, or indeed in any other union visited by me, to the provision as to allotments of land contained in the Laborers Acts of 1845-6.

Cottages. In the last union reported on by me—Wexford—it has been seen that it was only in rare and exceptional cases the laborers could obtain plots of potato ground from the farmers. Here, however, it is, as has already appeared, quite general; farmers commonly giving it free to their permanent laborers, while all over, as a rule, obtain it either simply by employing the necessary amount, or in certain cases by, in addition to that, paying a rent at the rate of from 10 to 15 per acre—this being an aid to the limited resources of the laborers which it is not easy to over-estimate.

Cow-pasture, &c. 54. There are no cow-pasture, cow-pens, or cow-pastures to be noted in any part of this union, and in fact any such privileges may be said to be unknown in this country in the sense in which they are understood in England.

Live stock. 55. Pigs, fowls, and goats may be described as representing the laborers' possessions in Limerick Union under this head.

Goats. Goats, being exceedingly mischievous wherever there are pastures, are usually to be met with only in the districts where no damage of this nature need be apprehended, and in such districts they are here rather numerous; their value to the laborers in giving milk whose throes are young children being very considerable.

VI.—BENEFIT SOCIETIES.

56. There are no benefit societies of any sort to be met with in this union.

VII.—TRADE UNION OF AGRICULTURAL LABORERS.

57. The same observations apply in regard to the existence of trade unions of agricultural laborers.

VIII.—GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED.

58. The general relations between employers and employed in this union have been everywhere described to me as being upon the whole either "fairly" or "fairly good."

Complaint of laborers. Notwithstanding this, however, the laborers frequently complain of the smallness of their wages, and in several cases also of the insufficiency of the work afforded them by the farmers—while the latter, on their side, complain of the idleness, indifference about their work, and want of skill of the laborers.

Complaint of farmers. There is, however, in these representations nothing to be noted here that I have not already experienced, more or less, in every union I have visited, the only difference observable being that such complaints have been, on the whole, more here than in most of the other districts.

IX.—THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABORERS.

59. That there has been a marked and universal improvement in the condition and general circumstances of the agricultural laborers here within the past 10 or 15 years, I think, of no doubt whatever.

Wages, &c. Their number has been seriously reduced by emigration within that period, and as a natural consequence the scale of wages, though not even yet very high, has gone up sensibly, and continuous employment has become, in most places, obtainable by all who are industrious, fairly efficient, and willing to accept such a rate of wages as it is in the power of the farmers, under existing conditions to offer them—while, concurrently with that, an appreciable fall has occurred in the cost of most of the articles entering into their daily consumption.

Appendix A. In illustration of this latter point I have only again to refer to the particulars set forth in the Appendix, Return A.

While the general state of things is as just described it is, I apprehend, equally certain that, in particular

localities, and during particular seasons of the year, many laborers fall, as a matter of fact, to find constant employment, and where this happens severe privation must necessarily be the temporary lot of themselves and their families.

It is mainly, though not exclusively, in and about the town districts that complaints on this head are encountered; and these are precisely the cases where the assistance supplied at such seasons to laborers in the rural districts by the produce of their potato plots is almost entirely absent.

On the other hand it is alleged and with, it is to be feared, only too much justice, that for the parishness admittedly endured by this particular class they are themselves chiefly, if not altogether, to blame.

This class of town laborers is almost everywhere recognized a good deal from, amongst others, the ranks of ex-military men, and Army reserve men, &c. having small portions of 6d. a day to rely upon; they are almost invariably described as being to a large extent exceedingly mischievous as workmen, and as being, moreover, extremely idle and careless in the performance of their tasks, as well as exorbitant and unreasonable in the wages they seek to exact.

It is principally to this cause that many competent and experienced judges attribute both the present prostration of farmers of restricting their employment of labor within the limits of what is absolutely indispensable for their purposes, and the inadequate and imperfect cultivation of the land which is daily becoming more and more conspicuous in most parts of the country.

60. I shall only add on this point a short quotation from the evidence of a very skilled and experienced agriculturalist, who himself farms 500 statute acres on which he has now only about 10 acres of tillage as a rule, though formerly it was much more. He says—

"The lands in this union are not half cultivated, owing not so much to the rate of wages, but to the small amount of work laborers now do, and they seem not to care if you dismiss them or not."

"There are a great many laborers in this union who do not get constant employment throughout the year, the farmers would retain them, and some of the laborers would remain. These laborers would be idle half the week in winter, many of these prefer casual work at high wages to constant employment at a lower scale."

The practice of paying the laborers partly in kind appears to prevail here to a large extent—probably two-thirds of the entire number employed by the farmers coming under the regulation.

I have dealt so fully with this topic, in all its aspects and effects, in my report on Wexford Union, that it appears to be unnecessary to go again in this place over the same ground.

Here, however, the diet allowed the laborers is not so good, while the rate of money wages is on the average about 25 weekly over the Wexford rate, and so far the arrangements in here, of course, less undesirable in its consequences to the laborers' families.

61. In six contemporary reports received by me the replies under this heading vary a good deal.

In two (Barn) districts it is described respectively as "good" and "very good"; in three others it is said to be either "fairly good" or "fair", and in the last, a purely rural district in the southern and best section of the union, the question is answered in more detail thus—

"The present condition of the agricultural laborer in this district is considerably improved as compared with former years. He is better fed, better housed, owing to the large number of cottages erected for his use, and the rate of wages paid him is higher in proportion to the prices of the various commodities sold, which enables him to keep better clothes and live more comfortably."

"In short his general condition is well improved."

62. The cottages built by the Board of Guardians, so far as I had the means of observing, are fairly enough distributed with respect to the demand for labor—though in one instance, in the neighbourhood of Mount Mellery, the wife of a laborer named John Lyons, whose cottage I visited, complained that her husband had to travel daily three miles to and from the place where he was at that time in employment.

Of the other laborers, those living on the farms of their employers have, of course, nothing to complain of in this particular, but no doubt those concentrated in

The Agricultural Survey
Limerick Union

Review

Wages with food

Contemporary reports

Distribution of laborers

the towns and villages are, as a rule, far less favorably circumstanced as to this.

62. The ownership of property in Lismore Union is a good deal divided. Probably one-third of the estate is included in the estate of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire, while the remaining two-thirds may be said to belong to about sixteen principal proprietors, of whom one-half reside on their estates, and the rest live either in other parts of Ireland or elsewhere.

63. Though the district is mainly a purely agricultural one these are, nevertheless, a few special industries, of greater or less importance, which call for some notice here.

64. The first and principal industry to be noted is the factory established at the little town of Cappoquin, in 1862, by Messrs. E. and F. Kenny, for the production of all classes of agricultural machinery and farming implements.

It was at first worked on only a very limited scale, but, by a gradual process of expansion, the operations have been year by year extended, and now it occupies a position of well-known commercial importance—having a large business connection not only in England and Scotland, but also in different parts of the Continent of Europe, &c.

It employs at the present time 35 hands in all: some, foremen, receive wages of £1.10s. weekly; mechanics about 25s., and the ordinary labourers earn by hour or piece-work—chiefly the former—about 12s. or 14s. a week; while boys, learning the business, are able to earn about 5s. a week.

Of the total number at present employed all are, I am informed, local people, except about twelve Englishmen, who have been imported for the departments requiring specially skilled labour.

65. The salmon fishery of Lismore is a well-known and very valuable one. It is leased by the Messrs. Kelly.

The season lasts from the 1st of February to the 1st of August, employing about 18 hands at wages of about 12s. a week each, with certain other allowances; besides four water-bailiffs, with wages of 10s. a week each. During the close season about ten hands find employment in connection with the hatcheries, and in other ways, at weekly wages of 9s. each.

The yearly take of salmon must be very large, and of very considerable commercial value, but on this head I failed to obtain any definite information—this being apparently "a trade secret."

66. The next local industry to be noticed is one rather peculiar to this locality—at least I have not, so far, met with anything of the same kind elsewhere.

The owner buys up all the butter of the surrounding country—then blends it all together by machinery, and after this preparatory process it is made up in packing cases of different sizes, and despatched to various markets, both in Ireland and England.

The number of hands employed in the establishment is about 30 or 32, at weekly wages averaging about 10s. each; but the operations in connection with it have already attained tolerably large dimensions; the yearly purchases from the farmers representing something like 22,000, or 23,000, but how far the process adopted in the case has the effect of improving the quality of the butter, or of correcting any defects or impurities in the original preparation, I am unable to say.

Should it prove to be attended with any such advantages there can, I think, be no doubt of its great practical value to the community at the present crisis in agricultural affairs.

67. The last industry to be noted is a small cannery at Tallow, established there some eight years ago. It is not working at present, being only kept open from 1st February to 31st October.

The operations are on a somewhat limited scale, 350 gallons daily being the largest receipts in the fall season, while the weekly wages earned in connection with it appear to amount to only 36s.

X.—CONCLUSION.

68. I have gone in such full detail into the facts under each separate head of inquiry that little remains to be added here in the shape of general observations.

While the house accommodation of the labourers generally in this union, especially in the towns, is distinctly and sensibly superior to that met with by

me in most of the other unions I have visited, there is, I think, no room at the same time to doubt that there are still many cases, in different rural districts, calling for a further extension of the Labourer's Act.

It is, of course, quite right that in a matter of so much importance the guardians should proceed as they have been doing, cautiously and gradually, and only on very full and accurate information being placed before them as to the requirements of each district. Whenever satisfactory evidence is thus furnished, as to the extent to which further action on their part is called for, their willingness to discharge the duty cast on them by the Legislature in the matter cannot, I think, be questioned, judging from the manner in which they have performed it in the past.

The same controversy as to the relative merits of the half and full acre of land in connection with the cottages that has been observed upon in other unions, prevails here too, though certainly not in the same acute form that it appeared to have assumed in the union of Cashel, but having in that case felt it necessary to go, at some length, into the question involved I need not dwell further upon it here.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
(Signed) W. F. O'HART
(Assistant Commissioner).

R-VII.
Lismore.

Extent of
cottages plot.

APPENDIX A.

RENTS OF CONTRACT FARMERS OF THE PRINCIPAL ARTICLES OF WORKING (CONVENTION FOR THE YEARS ENDING 30th March 1883 and 1882)

Names of Articles.	Average Prices.		Remarks.
	1882.	1883.	
Wheat (sacked 40 lbs.) "low 2-4 quality" per 40 lb. bush	0 0 4	0 0 4	(21 at present.)
Indian Meal per bush of 56 lb.	0 12 0	0 12 0	
Oatsmeal "	1 15 0	1 15 0	
Barley Meal " per cwt.	0 12 0	0 12 0	
Yes " per lb.	0 2 8	0 2 0	
Beans " "	0 0 8	0 0 8	
Peas " "	0 0 7	0 0 4	
Maize " "	0 0 7	0 0 7	
Coarse Meal " "	0 0 8	0 0 8	
Onions " "	0 2 6	0 2 0	
Turnips " per dozen bottles	0 1 0	0 1 0	Double X (Government).
Potatoes " per dozen	0 1 0	0 1 0	
Wheat " per dozen bottles	0 10 0	0 12 0	
Wheat " per gallon	0 16 0	0 18 0	
Beans " per cwt.	0 12 0	0 12 0	
Peas " "	0 1 1	0 1 1	
Pepper " per lb.	0 0 8	0 0 8	
Ready (Single Wort) per bottle	0 0 0	0 0 0	Single King (Government).
Butter " per lb.	0 1 2	0 1 1	
Cash " per cwt.	0 15 0	0 15 0	Best Currant Honey Currant
Cattle (Friesian) " per dozen lbs.	0 4 0	0 4 0	
Wool " per cwt.	1 0 0	1 0 0	Yellow Green (Yorkshire)
Wool " "	0 0 0	0 0 0	
Shedding (H.) " per lb.	0 1 1	0 1 1	Dark Green Shedding
Wool " "	0 0 0	0 0 0	
Grey Wool " per yard	0 0 0	0 0 0	
White Thread " "	0 1 2	0 1 2	
Wool " "	0 0 0	0 0 0	Dark Green Shedding
General average cost per head per week and maintenance	0 1 1	0 1 1	
Clothing " "	0 0 0	0 0 0	
Total " "	0 3 8	0 3 8	

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

I R E L A N D.

R E P O R T

BY

MR. W. P. O'BRIEN, C.B.

(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER),

UPON THE

POOR LAW UNION OF THOMASTOWN

(CO. KILKENNY).

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Return of contract prices for workhouse supplies.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

To GEORGE DEANE, Esq., Secretary,
Royal Commission on Labour.

MONKSTOWN, Co. DUBLIN,
8th March 1892.

SIR,

I have the honour to report, for the information of the Royal Commission on Labour, that I proceeded to Killybeg on the 16th ult., and was there engaged during the three ensuing weeks in ascertaining the general condition of the agricultural labourers in the poor law union of Thomastown, which was selected as affording the best typical representation of the state of affairs prevailing in that county.

2. For the purposes of local inquiry I visited during my stay the following centres of population, viz.—Gorebridge, Graiguevarna, and Inishoge in the eastern side of the union, Buncastlebridge in the north, Thomastown in the centre, and Stonyford and Knocktopher in the west and south-west.

3. I likewise visited the union of Castletown, constituting the north-eastern division of the county, with a view of ascertaining how far the condition of the agricultural labourers was there affected by the influence of the extensive coal-mining industry which exists, and has existed for nearly two centuries, in that quarter.

4. The results of my inquiries I shall now proceed to submit for the information of the Royal Commissioners, following in so doing the same order of reference to the several subjects embraced in my instructions that I have observed in all my previous reports.

5. I attended the first meeting of the Thomastown Board of Guardians held after my arrival in the district, and I desire to express my sincere obligations both to the members of that body and their officers, the clerk of the union, the poor rate collectors, and the relieving officers, for the willing and valuable assistance I experienced at their hands.

6. I have at the same time to tender a similar acknowledgment to the officers and men of the Royal Irish Constabulary, whose intelligence and information with respect to all matters of local interest have proved a never failing source of reliance and help to me, upon all occasions, in the discharge of my duty.

7. Following in this respect my inevitable practice, I take leave to submit a few preliminary observations bearing on the general circumstances of the union, before proceeding to deal categorically with the several prescribed heads of inquiry.

8. The union of Thomastown, situated in the east of the county of Kilkenny, is an entirely inland district, and is divided for the purposes of poor law administration into 25 electoral divisions.

The boundaries are:—North, the union of Kilkenny; East, the counties of Carlow and Wickford; South, the union of New Ross; and West, the unions of Callan and Carrick-on-Suir.

It is watered from its northern to its south-eastern extremity by the Nore, formerly Noree, a river which, rising in the Queen's county above Durrus, pursues for a distance of nearly 40 miles its course through the centre of the County Kilkenny; by Ballinaghet, Kilkenny, Thomastown, and Inishoge; up to which last point the river is tidal, and some eight or nine miles to the south-east of which it terminates by a junction with the waters of the Barrow, a little north of New Ross.

The poor law valuation of the entire union is 66,039¹/₂, the area 107,501 acres; and the present population 14,875 as against 18,817 and 16,873, the census returns for 1871 and 1881 respectively, this being equivalent to a reduction of in the former case 3.941 or about 17.3 per cent., and in the latter of 1.897 or about 11.3 per cent. of the previous population.

The total number of rated holdings in the union is 3,103, which is equivalent to an average of 34 acres in extent, and nearly 13¹/₂ valuation for each holding.

Dividing the valuation of the entire union into the area and population we get for the former an average of 12s. 4d. per acre, and for the latter of over 4l. 8s. per head of the present population.

9. The soil presents considerable diversities—it is in parts of a poor and inferior quality, while in others it is good and fertile, and is found well adapted to the purposes of both pasture and tillage farming, on the whole it may be pronounced to be of a fair general character.

In some districts the prevailing character is that of a light clay, in others a good loam is encountered, while in certain districts the land may be styled mountainous, consisting of a stony, dry, and friable earth, except where it inclines to a black, moory, but shallow turf, which it generally does in the higher parts.

The diversities just referred to will be best illustrated by the following particulars, extracted from the rate books of the union, showing the ratio borne by the area to the valuation both in some of the best and also in some of the least favourably circumstanced electoral divisions, viz.—

No. 1.—SURREY SOIL.

Electoral Division.	Area.	Valuation.	Valuation per Acre.
	Acres.	£	s. d.
Gorebridge	2,684	2,825	21 0
Thomastown	3,151	4,575	19 0
Barclay Church	4,080	2,640	16 9
Buncastlebridge	4,681	3,561	15 7
Stonyford	3,332	3,812	16 6

No. 2.—IRISH SOIL.

Electoral Division.	Area.	Valuation.	Valuation Per Acre.
	Acres.	£	s. d.
Enaghmore	5,541	1,134	4 3
Castletown	3,414	2,069	6 3
Castell	4,616	1,461	6 3
Castletown	3,613	1,344	8 3
Inishoge	5,780	2,341	8 11
Barrow Union	107,501	66,039	12 4

10. The surface of the country is much diversified. It may be described as being, in a great measure, fairly level, though undulating in a good deal,—but it is also, in parts, hilly and uneven, indeed mountainous in character, and on the eastern border, close to Graiguevarna, is the lofty hill of Brandon, which rises, as I should judge it, to the height of about 700 feet above sea level.

11. As the soil of this county is seldom much raised above the rock that forms its base, it is not very difficult to trace the various strata which it often appears near the surface, and by their position seem to show the successive order in which they were deposited by the operations of nature.

There is a considerable diversity observable in the geological characteristics of this county generally. In the districts within the limits of which is comprehended the union of Thomastown are found lower limestones, limestone shale, old red sandstone, lower silurian, and granite.

In the north-western section of the union are met extensive beds of lower limestone, interstratified with beds of limestone shale and magnesian limestone, the

No VIII.
Thomastown.

Nature of the soil.

Surface of the country.

Geological formation.

Diversity of formation.

R.-VIII. **Thamesmead.** prevailing formation is, however, the old red sandstone, which extends over a considerable area north and south, to the east of Thamesmead, and next to this is found lower strata, extending eastwards to Graysmead, where granite is, for the first time, encountered.

The granite hills occupy but a very small portion of the county Kilbenny lying chiefly between the rivers Nore and Barrow.

The Barrow. The Barrow, anciently called the Kings, which skirts the county along its eastern border for a distance of about 20 miles, flows between rocks and upon a bed of granite beneath Bandon Hill, and above Graysmead.

Granite country. In all the higher parts of the granite district the rock often appears above the surface, besides which the face of the earth to the north of Graysmead is everywhere strewed with great masses of granite, unless where it has been removed for the purposes of agriculture.

Marl and limestone gravel. In this district are found occasionally a few beds of marl and limestone gravel that have been deposited in the lower parts. A large quantity of the latter is found on the other side of the Barrow, opposite to Graysmead, and some, though very little, is also found near the foot of Bandon Hill.

The use of land. 12. The farms in this union vary much in extent. As a general rule they may be described as ranging from 50 to 70 or 80 acres, but a large number are to be met with in certain districts which either considerably exceed, or fall very much below these limits.

Jurors' lists. The lists of qualified jurors may be taken as furnishing a tolerably fair index as to this.

Common jurors. The qualification for common jurors in Kilbenny County is a valuation of 40s. in the rural districts and of 10s. in the towns, and under these heads 459 are qualified in the union.

Special jurors. The qualification for special jurors is a valuation of 100s. and under this head there are 196 returned, thus making a total of 655 who are qualified under these two heads.

Nature of the farming generally. 13. The farming pursued in this union is of a very mixed character, combining tillage, dairy, and dry stock farming, but is greatly varying proportions in the different districts.

Tillage. Though oats here tillage has sensibly declined, as compared with the state of things prevailing 20 years ago, it is nevertheless still pursued to an extent quite exceptional at the present time, and though in a few of the districts where the soil is not suitable for the purpose, it is stated not to exceed one-fourth of the holdings, in others it ranges from one-fifth to as much as two-thirds and even three-fourths, one-third being, perhaps, about the general average.

Dairy and dry stock farming. For the rest the division between dairy and dry stock farming appears to be pretty equal upon the whole, the choice being governed for the most part by the peculiar nature of the soil in each particular district.

Tim crops generally. The crops grown consist chiefly of oats, wheat, barley, potatoes, turnips, and mangolds—the selection being in this case, too, mainly influenced, of course, by the suitability of the land for the purpose it is ordinarily applied to.

Condition of the farming generally. 14. Here, as almost everywhere else, the farming classes are feeling the pressure of the present times, but, upon the whole, they appear, so far as my means of judging have extended, to have met the crisis in their fortunes under better and more hopeful conditions, and with brighter prospects, as regards the ultimate result, than I have noticed in other places.

Local conditions. 15. The union of Thomastown is chiefly situated in the baronies of Gowran and Knocktopher, but it includes portions of three other baronies; viz., Rathfriland, Kells, and Kells; and I find that the percentage rates for county purposes assessed on these five baronies during the past year only reached the following very moderate amounts; viz:—

County rates.	Barony.	Percentage
		s. d.
Gowran	- - -	1 6
Knocktopher	- - -	1 6
Rathfriland	- - -	1 7
Kells	- - -	1 6
Kells	- - -	1 8

The poor rate assessments for the year 1892-3 are equally favourable, ranging from a minimum of 11d. in the electoral division of Fossan to a maximum of 8s. 8d. in that of Ballybale, but averaging on the entire union only 1s. 3d.

The only addition to be made to these comparatively moderate liabilities of a public nature consists of a trifling sum, 25s. 14s. 6d., still remaining due under the provisions of the Seed Supply Act of 1891, and which will be defrayed out of the produce of the current rate.

16. The highly favourable condition of this union in regard to its financial affairs, as just described, is further sustained by the statistics of its pauperism during the past year, as compared with those for the corresponding period ten years ago; viz:—

	1886.	1892.
Number of workhouse inmates	168	154
Number on out-door relief	573	685
Total	741	839
General average cost of food and accessories	s. d. 2 5½	s. d. 2 9

From this Table it will be seen that within the decade included in the comparative statement there has been a reduction not only in the number of workhouse inmates, but also in the number of recipients of out-door relief, amounting in the aggregate to the substantial decline of 131, or about 16 per cent. of the previous number.

17. With these introductory observations I shall now proceed to deal separately with the several heads of inquiry in the usual order.

I.—THE SEVERAL LOCALITIES.

18. In so district as yet visited by me here I found the demand for and supply of labour to be, upon the whole, as fairly balanced as appears to be the case in this union.

In the harvest, and other specially busy times, an unobscured scarcity, often reaching considerable inconvenience, is said to be experienced; but nearly all the testimony obtained by me irrefragably points to the conclusion that it is only during these brief and transitory periods the balance is seriously disturbed, and that there are few instances to be met with in which labourers who are industrious, and willing to accept a reasonable rate of remuneration, cannot succeed in finding constant work throughout the entire year.

19. The reports furnished to me by the constabulary, as well as by the several poor rate collectors, relieving officers, and others possessing the best opportunities of becoming acquainted with the actual facts, coincide most strikingly on this particular point—the exceptions to be noted as to this are based, as a usual, chiefly from the towns—of which this union contains three, coming properly under that designation, viz., Thomastown, population 979, Graysmead, population 973; and Inistioge, population 559.

Of 15 labourers examined by me at Thomastown all except four stated that they were able to obtain constant employment throughout the year; but four dissentients to this alleged that they were "more than half of the year without employment."

Of eight labourers who attended to give evidence before me at Inistioge, the great majority stated that they either had constant employment, or were only without it for a few weeks; but one alleged that he was unemployable for six months, and another said he was so for three or four months in the course of the year.

Of several labourers examined by me at Graysmead, one alleged he was "unemployed for about three months of the year," and another went much further than this, stating as to this—"I did not get 50 days' employment in each of the last three years."

That some labourers chiefly of the lower class are, as a matter of fact, frequently without work during the winter season here as elsewhere is beyond dispute;

The Assessment of Rates in the County of Wick.

Poor rate

Seed Supply Act of 1891

Statistical

Pauperism

Supply of labour

Condition of the farming generally

Local conditions

Thomastown

Graysmead

Inistioge

Labourers

Employment

Unemployment

Winter season

Dispute

Dispute

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but on the other hand it is stated, and so, I believe, true, that for this they are, at least as a general rule, themselves mainly to blame.

I am satisfied that few in this union need be at any time idle, if really willing and able to give an honest day's labour in return for such reasonable wages as farmers can afford to pay under existing conditions.

II.—CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

20. Though, as has been just explained, employment in this union is, as a rule, fairly constant and continuous, the terms of engagement vary considerably, and comprehend hirings by the year, half-year, quarter, week, and day respectively.

Boarded farm servants—a rather numerous class in this union—are sometimes engaged by the quarter, but more commonly by the year or half-year. The ordinary class of labourers, even when continuously retained in the service of the same employer, are usually engaged by the week. In the harvest, and at other special times, the hiring is usually by the day.

21. The hours of labour most commonly observed in this union are, in summer, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 7 p.m.; in winter, from 7 a.m. or 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with an allowance for meals of from 1½ to 2 hours.

The time usually devoted to labour is, in summer, from 10 to 11 hours daily, and, in winter, about two hours less.

22. Sunday labour is very limited, and applies only to such work as, from its peculiar nature, cannot be dispensed with.

III.—WAGES AND BARRINGS.

23. Though the rate of wages paid in different parts of the union varies somewhat, the general scale may be said to be as follows:—

Boarded farm servants, who are boarded and lodged by their employers, usually receive from 10s to 12s, and 14s a year, all found.

Ordinary labourers, who are supplied with food, get from 6s to 7s a week; but so and so are the general rates where three daily meals are supplied, 6s being, probably, the most common.

When no food is supplied, 8s to 10s are the usual rates paid, but 9s appears to be the most common.

Labourers only casually employed at harvest and other busy seasons usually get from 2s. to 3s. 6d. and 3s. a day, with diet.

24. Women are only employed at those times, and usually get somewhat about the same rate as that paid to the men.

25. It is usual to give labourers in regular employment either an extra allowance of 1s. or 6d. a day during the harvest, or a bulk sum of from 10s. to 25s. at the end of it.

26. Some farmers give to labourers, such as ploughmen, in their constant employment, a free house and garden, or perhaps an allowance of firing, milk, &c., but, as a rule, the only resources open, in addition to wages in this union, to the ordinary class of labourers who are not provided with more cottages are—(1) the plots of coarse potato ground, which the farmers are found generally willing to grant free of rent, and surely in consideration of the manure supplied by the labourers; and (2) the profits realised by their wives from the rearing of fowls, pigs, &c.

27. The estimated annual earnings of the several classes of labourers who find regular employment may be said to be about as follows:—

Ordinary labourers, without food, from 20s. 15s. to 26s.

Ordinary labourers, with food, from 10s. to 12s. 10s. Skilled labourers, 31s. 4s.

Boarded labourers, with food and lodging, from 10s. to 16s.

The annual earnings of women and of the class of labourers who, like them, only take casual and intermittent employment, it is not possible to calculate with any approach to accuracy.

IV.—COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.

28. The operations of the Thomastown Board of Guardians in the execution of the powers conferred on them under the provisions of the Labourers Dwellings Acts have been, it is only just to say, by no means inconsiderable, though no doubt more restricted a good deal than has been the case in some of the other unions in the province of Leinster.

The number of cottages already completed, and occupied in the union is 60; each consisting of four separate apartments, and built at a cost varying from 100s. to 110s. each.

They have each attached to them the usual statutory half acre of land, and are let to the labourers at the certainly very moderate rent of 8s. per week—which is, I am informed, grossly speaking, paid with commendable punctuality.

29. These cottages were erected under two separate schemes, the first consisting of 20, and the latter of 40; in the case of the former the lots were not offered, and in these cases much complaint is sometimes heard as to the lateness sold experienced in the winter time.

In the second, and larger scheme, however, this defect was remedied, and it is, I understand, contemplated to make this provision general.

A Provisional Order has been already obtained for the erection of 14 more cottages, and a fresh scheme, providing for 48 others, in addition to these, has been recently, I learn, prepared, and will be immediately taken into consideration with a view to its adoption.

Whether these several schemes when fully carried out will suffice to meet all the exigencies of the case it would not be, at the present time, possible to pronounce,—but, speaking both from personal observation and the testimony of several competent and reliable witnesses, I have no difficulty in concluding that the provision so yet made, in this respect, is altogether inadequate.

30. Of the houses in the towns and villages near, so far as I have seen them, are, though with certain defects, fair enough, but many others are the reverse,—while as regards those in the rural districts, which are situated in great part on the lands of the farmers,—the condition is on all sides acknowledged to be wretched—mainly owing, it is stated, to the persistent neglect of the owners to keep the roofs (usually thatched) at a proper state of repair.

31. I will conclude my observations under this head with a few short extracts from the evidence on the subject of three of the four dispensary medical officers at present employed in the union.

The medical officer of the Knocktopher district says:—

"The principal impediment for labourers to remain in the district is the building of cottages for them."

"A fair number have been already erected, but it is necessary to build many more before sufficient house accommodation is furnished for agricultural labourers."

The following is the evidence given in 1891 by the medical officer of the Inistioge Dispensary; he says:—

"I have been here 26 years. The houses are plenty, but ought to be better both in town and country, and they have no back accommodation."

"I think about a dozen more unoccupied cottages are required in this district. They are a great bore."

The medical officer of Graigue-Moreau district says on the same subject:—

"These who have got cottages under the Labourers Dwellings Acts are fairly well off; but in this town, though the great bulk of them are agricultural labourers, the dwellings are wretched," and referring to the state of repair, and the accommodation of the labourers houses throughout his entire district, he describes the farmer as being, except in the case of the union cottages, "generally wretched," and the latter as being, with the same exceptions, "very bad."

V.—GARDEN AND ALLIEMENTS.

32. As stated in paragraph 26, the cottages (66) already erected by the Board of Guardians have each attached to them the usual half acre of land, but no labourers houses have been, so far, erected in any of the towns situated in this union, and there has been no resource had as yet to the provisions as to land allotments contained in sections 16 of 48 & 49 Viet c. 77, and section 12 of 49 & 50 Viet c. 39, but, as already explained (paragraph 20), such labourers in this union as are provided enough to collect the necessary supply of manure for the purpose, experience little or no difficulty in obtaining from the neighbouring farmers a sufficient plot of coarse potato ground, free of rent, and it is said to be in addition, quite a common thing for the farmers to plough and prepare the land for the crop, the labourer being only asked to sow and sow it.

L-1111
General
Topic.

This, it is hardly necessary to say, constitutes a very substantial addition to the resources of the labourers here, and it is one which they do not all enjoy, in similar measure, in many other places.

VI.—BENEFIT SOCIETIES.

33. No benefit or other analogous societies have any existence whatever in any part of Thomastown Union.

VII.—TRADE UNIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

34. The same observation applies under this head. No labour organisation of any kind either now exists or has at any time existed in the Thomastown Union.

VIII.—GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED.

General
Topic.

35. The general relations between the employers and their labourers in this union, are represented as being upon the whole, good and friendly, and though there are, no doubt, exceptions to this to be met with in particular places, I am disposed to believe that the general feeling is as stated.

Strong complaints have been in numerous instances made to me by labourers, both as to their terms of remuneration, and the entire inadequacy of the current rate of wages to support a family, but I believe that the labourers generally now realise how entirely it is at present out of the power of the farmers to increase the latter's remuneration. A rather striking confirmation of this is furnished by the evidence given before me at Ballybeg, by an intelligent farm labourer named James Rooney, a single man, boarded and lodged by his employer, and receiving for a week, with constant work, no more.

"I DON'T THINK THE FARMERS CAN EVER EXPECT TO PAY THEMSELVES AS WELL AS ILLUSTRATION OF THIS I MIGHT GIVE YOU HERE OF STONE CUTTING IN MAY LAST, AND I COULD NOT NOW GET WHAT THEY WENT FOR. I PAID 11L. 10S. FOR THEM, AND I COULD NOT NOW RAISE NO MORE THAN 10S. 6D. FOR THEM. A MONTH FOR SIX HORSES FOR GRASSING, AND 11L. OR 12L. SINCE THEN FOR FEEDING THEM."

IX.—THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

Comparison
with former
years.

36. The general condition of the agricultural labourers in this union has, undoubtedly, undergone, in several essential respects, a considerable improvement during the past 10 or 15 years.

While these remarks have been largely thinned by the process of emigration, the statistics of which have been already quoted in paragraph 8, there has not been in this district anything approaching to the diminution in the extent of land devoted to tillage farming that has been experienced in other quarters, and, as a natural consequence flowing from the continued operation of these causes, it has been seen that, except in certain cases where the fault lies, probably for the most part with the labourers themselves, employment is almost everywhere now obtainable throughout the entire year.

It is true, no doubt, that within the period referred to the actual distress in the general state of money wages, though sensible, has not been very great—except during particular seasons, when the labourers can now, in fact, almost command their own terms—but it is to be observed that during this time a substantial decline has been experienced in the cost of food, necessaries, and clothing, &c.—a change which could not fail to exercise a most important influence on the condition and general comfort of the working classes.

Thanks to
Apprentice A.

In illustration of this point I appeal, marked A., to certain showing the contract prices paid, in 1882 and 1883 respectively, for the several articles in daily use in the union workhouse, and which will best explain how marked an improvement, in favour of the consumer, has taken place in this respect within the last decade.

Labourers in
Daily use
Article.

37. Consistently with this it has been seen that, though the measure is still in an incomplete stage the board of guardians have been by no means idle in extending the great practical boon of the provisions of the Labourers Dwellings Acts of 1883-91 to the agricultural labourers of Thomastown Union, who, in addition to this, appear to enjoy to a quite exceptional extent the great practical advantage of being able to procure, as a rule, as much superior potato ground from the neighbouring farmers as they are in a position to manage, and without being required to give any other return than this for the benefit so conferred.

Co. Wick.

38. Notwithstanding these favourable conditions, I regret to say that, though the majority of the con-

stantly reports received by me represent the general condition of the labourers in the respective districts of the union as "fair," or as "fair, with the exception of the house accommodation," it is in no less than four instances described as being either "poor," "very poor," or "bad."

The
Agricultural
Labourers
Union.

Where the families of the labourers are—as is very frequently the case—large, young, and helpless, or where—as it also only too often happens—their wives are devoted to domestic industry and thrift, the state of things is easily accounted for; but it is to be feared that, entirely outside these sources of distress, the labourers themselves are, in numerous instances, directly responsible for the unfavourable condition of their lives.

Families.

Wives.

Health of
labourers.

39. In illustration of this I may give here a few extracts selected from the evidence furnished to me by witnesses of unimpaired competence and impartiality.

Witnesses.

An experienced agriculturalist in a well-circumscribed district, and having a thorough knowledge of the county, says as to this—

"The general condition of the agricultural labourers is various."

"Those that are industrious and sober are pretty comfortable, but those who spend their time and earnings of the public-house are in misery; and this is the greatest temptation and cause the labourer has to contend with."

A resident land agent of much intelligence, and having extensive relations with the agricultural classes in a considerable part of the union and county, says on the same subject—

"Employers, as a rule complain that the labourer class are very independent, and they often have great difficulty in retaining their services, especially at the most busy time of the year."

"As to the general condition of the labourer, if a good workman and steady, he has no difficulty in procuring plenty of work, and I should consider that in many instances he is better off than some of the small tenant farmers."

One further extract will suffice on this point—

A medical correspondent having a minute and extended experience of the habits of the labourers in an important district of the union, says—

"The present class of agricultural labourers are very demoralised, and spend most of their wages with the publican."

"The labour question is the most important cause of anxiety and annoyance with large farmers who keep a permanent staff, but can never count on their full number returning to work on any day, in that the labourers are the farmers' (employers') masters."

Labourers/
Wives.

40. Though the labourers' wives are, as a rule, here as in most other districts, manifestly deficient in a practical knowledge of the many small domestic economies and contrivances that must always so largely affect the comfort of the working classes, they are in the union reported as being, on the whole, fairly industrious. There can be no doubt, judging both from what I have heard and myself seen, that many of them are able to contribute in no slight degree to the resources of their families, by the attention they devote to the feeding of pigs, and the rearing of poultry, &c., even though a sense of justice requires that I should add as to this that they are in these respects considerably behind their County Wickford sisters, to whose special skill and helpfulness in such matters it was recently my agreeable duty to bear testimony.

Domestic
industries.

Co. Wickford
industries
of
Wick.

41. Thomastown having been selected as the best typical representative of the county of Kilkenny, I considered it advisable before bringing my inquiry thence to a close to visit also the union of Castlecomer—occupying the north-eastern section of the county—for the purpose of satisfying myself as to how far, if at all, the condition of the agricultural labourers in that quarter of the county had been affected by the competition of the large coal-mining industry which has existed there for, as I learn, nearly two hundred years.

Coal-mining.

These coal fields are situated a few miles to the east of the town of Castlecomer, and near the north-eastern border of the Queen's County.

The annual output at the present time averages, I am informed, about 31,000 tons of anthracite coal and culm combined, representing an aggregate commercial value of to or about 25,000£, the price, as sold at the pit's mouth, being of coal from 11s. 8d. to 12s. per ton, according to quality, and of culm at 3d. per ton.

Output.

Commercial
value.

42. The total number of hands employed at the present time is 347, viz., 203 underground workers, and 84

Number of
hands
employed
underground
and
above-ground
workers.

Very Anxious about labourers	overground, the latter consisting chiefly of ordinary labourers, but with some few tradesmen and clerks also included in the total.	With this may be contrasted the cost to the consumer when Hoare first called attention to the subject, nearly 170 years ago	B-VIII. Thomson town.
Wages of men	43. The underground workers are all paid by task-work, so much per ton, and they earn at a rate at least 4s. a day, sometimes more, but only work 11 days in each fortnight, every alternate Monday being taken as an entire holiday.	He says as to this— "Already one coal mine had been found in Ireland, a few years since, by mere hazard, and without having been sought for." "In an iron mine belonging to Mr. Christopher Woodroffe, after having mined the ore from it for a great while, they came at last to fuel, so as ever since the people dwelling in these parts have paid it for their firing, finding it very cheap, for the load of an Irish cow, driving by one garden, did mend them, besides the charges of bringing it in, at one penny only—three pence to the dipper, and sixpence to the owner." The original price of this coal was then, it would appear, only about 18s per cwt., as the ear, "drawn by one garden," would presumably take about 6 pwt.	Value in 1800.
Hours of labour.	44. The working hours are 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., they breakfast before 7 and get half an hour for dinner.	These coals, it may be observed in conclusion, are very heavy, and burn with little flame, but for like charcoal, and continue so, as I learn, for the space of seven or eight hours, causing a very great and even violent heat.	Stature of the coal.
Wages of men and women.	45. The overground workers are paid like the ordinary labourers of the district, by the day, tradesmen receiving from 3s. 6d. to 5s. a day, and ordinary labourers 1s. 6s. to 2s. a day, with the same working hours as the miners.	51. The local industries, apart from the cultivation of the land, to be noted in this union, are few and inconsiderable, there being no town included within its limits possessing a population of 1,000 inhabitants at the present time.	Local in- dustries.
Hours of labour.	46. As miners cannot perform agricultural labour, nor agricultural labourers undertake mining operations, the two callings, though pursued in the same district, do not appear to have any direct or appreciable effect upon each other, except that the sons of agricultural labourers, to a limited extent, adopt the rival pursuit of mining, who are, however, mainly recruited from the ranks of their own children.	There are, however, some to be noticed, of which the following are the particulars, so far as I have been able to collect them.	
Wages of men and women.	47. The wages earned by the ordinary labourers employed as overground workers in connexion with the mines being about from 11s to 12s a week, this has certainly had the effect of raising the wages of the agricultural labourers in the immediate vicinity of the collieries to 10s a week without and 7s with feed, this being about 1s a week over the average scale prevailing either in the other parts of Castlecomer Union, or in any part of the Union of Thomastown.	52. There is at Thomastown a tannery which affords constant employment to 15 men, at wages of 12s per week. Hours of labour, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. in summer, with two hours for meals; winter, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with one hour for dinner.	Tannery.
Hours of labour.	Except in the two particulars just indicated I cannot find that the condition of the agricultural labourers in Castlecomer Union has been in any way influenced by the proximity of the mines.	53. There is a flour and meal mill at Thomastown, employing constantly 25 men at 12s per week, and five boys, sometimes more, at 6s per week.	Millers. Thomastown.
Wages of men and women.	48. The collieries of Castlecomer possess a special interest in themselves, however, altogether apart from the considerations which influenced me in visiting the district, both for their great intrinsic value to the surrounding country, and also in some degree owing to the fact that it was here the first discovery of coal was made in Ireland, in the early part of the eighteenth century.	At Bennetsbridge there is a flour mill which employs 15 men at 12s per week. The hours of labour are at both the same, so in the case of the tannery.	Flour-mill. Bennetsbridge.
Hours of labour.	49. In the Natural History of Ireland (1793) I have noted of their first discovery a few years previously, and observes that "there are coals enough in this" mine to furnish a whole country, nevertheless these "neighbouring phantoms, because the mine being situated far from rivers the transportation is too "chargeable by land."	There are also some coarse meal mills, which are worked entirely by the owner, and employ no other hands.	Coarse meal mills.
Wages of men and women.	The risks of things thus described, it is much to be regretted, continue to prevail, to a considerable extent, to the present time, after the lapse of more than 180 years.	54. Though there is a good deal of butter made in certain districts of the union, circumstances, so far as at least, do not appear to have found at all the same favour here that they have attracted as scores of the other unions reported on by me, notably Keshford and Oulart.	Butter mills.
Hours of labour.	50. The nearest railway station from which the coal could be distributed at a distance is Carlow, about twelve miles away, the cost of conveying it to which reaches, I understand, 6s. per ton, or about three times, probably, what it would cost to transport at the same distance by railway.	On the tree that have been established, the principal one is at Knocktopher, in the south-west of the union. The operations connected with it for the year ended 31st December 1893 appear to have been as follows— The total number of gallons of milk received during the period stated was 64,331 The total number of gallons of cream extracted was 10,725, or one gallon of cream to six gallons of milk. The number of lbs. of butter made was 21,450, or 1 lb. of butter to 3 gallons of milk. The price paid for milk was 4½d per gallon, and the price charged for the separated milk sold was, to customers, 1d., and to others, 1½d per gallon. The average price charged for creamery butter is 1s 1d per lb. The manager gets 15s., and dairymaid 12s. per week, no other hands are regularly employed.	Knocktopher.
Wages of men and women.	So handicapped in the industrial race, it is no matter of surprise that the collieries of Castlecomer have as yet failed, except within a comparatively limited area, to realise the sanguine anticipations of the historian. It was therefore with much satisfaction I found, while visiting the neighbourhood, that an English engineer of experience was then engaged in surveying the locality with the highly important purpose of constructing it by railway with some one or other of the existing systems, and that at length, it may be permitted to hope, practically providing for the future development and expansion of this hitherto much neglected, but really very important field of national industry.	Another creamery has been established at Jerpoint, a few miles to the south of Thomastown, but this is on a very small scale. The precise details of the operations I have not obtained, but it only employs one dairymaid at 12s. a year.	Jerpoint.
Hours of labour.	51. Circumstances though the operations in connexion with these mines still necessarily rest, owing to the absence of cheap means of transport, it is of some interest to note how great a change in the market value of the products has nevertheless taken place in the interval between the period of their original discovery and the present time.	55. During the open season for net fishing on the river Noe, about 30 labourers make probably about 81, each by the salmon taken by them in the Lurragh district.	Salmon. Lurragh.
Wages of men and women.	Salting an average between calm and the different qualities of coal produced, the present price obtained for the output at the pits may be stated to be about 9s 6d per ton; but, taking the coal alone, the average would be from 11s. 8d. to 12s. per ton, according to quality.	In addition to this there are also some salmon fisheries at Bennetsbridge, situated on the Noe, about midway between Killybeg and Thomastown. I have not succeeded in getting particulars, but the operations are, I believe, of a limited character.	
Hours of labour.		56. There was, until recently, a woollen mill, at Graiguenamagh, but it is not, I understand, at	Woollen mill.

2-VIII.
Thomestown
Union.

present working, and I am not aware whether it is contemplated to resume operations in connection with it in the future.

Beyond what I have just enumerated, no other industries reveal to be noted in any part of Thomestown Union.

Distribution
of labourers.

57. In addition to the three principal towns in the union, an already described, there are also included within its limits several smaller towns or villages, as Goresbridge, Bennetsbridge, Knocktopher, Sloneycourt, Ballyshale, and Dengarven, and a considerable number of the labouring class are naturally to be found concentrated in these, though many are likewise dispersed over the rural districts, and reside on the lands of the farmers.

The cottages built by the board of guardians (50) appear to be fairly scattered, and it is probable that, upon the whole, the agricultural labourers in this union are not unfavourably circumstanced as regards proximity to work.

Distribution
of estates.

58. The ownership of property in this union is a good deal divided.

There are in all about 10 who may be designated the principal estate owners in the district, viz.:-

Name.	No. of Acres.
Viccount Clifden	5,000
E. K. R. Tighe	8,000
Jard of Carrick	1,000
Viccount Mosely	2,000
J. C. Shaw (in Chancery)	1,000
J. Davis	1,000
Representative of J. Murphy	1,000
Hon. W. de Montmorency	5,000
Colonel Field	1,000

X.—CONCLUSION.

59. Thomestown is the eighth union over which my inquiries have now extended, and I close my report with reference to it, in accordance with my general practice, with a few concluding observations of a general nature, as suggested by the evidence.

60. Of the eight unions referred to Thomestown and Westford are particularly distinguished by the extent of village farming still pursued in them, and by the greater continuity of the employment which, mainly owing to this, the agricultural labourers are in these cases able to obtain throughout the entire year.

As between Westford and Thomestown the rate of wages paid, in combination with that to the labourer is distinctly higher in the latter than in the former case, the difference amounting to from 1s. to 2s. per week; while in regard to facilities for obtaining a plot of secure ground for the year's crop of potatoes, an almost inimitable boon, the Thomestown labourers undeniably occupy a far more favourable position than those of the same class in Westford, where this privilege appears to be lost sparingly, and rather grudgingly, conceded by the farmers.

61. Notwithstanding these advantages, judging from what has come under my own personal observation, I am disposed to conclude that, upon the whole, the agricultural labourers in Westford are, probably, the better circumstanced of the two.

62. This result is, I think, principally due to the combined operation of three distinct causes, viz.:-

(1.) The board of guardians of Westford Union have been considerably in advance of that of Thomestown in their application of the provisions of the Labourers Dwelling Acts, and here, there can be no doubt, by thus already effected a considerable amelioration in the former condition of these classes of their population.

(2.) The wives of the Westford labourers not only take on themselves an unusual, and, in many instances perhaps even an excessive share of out-door labour, but, also, contribute exceptionally and materially to the limited resources of their families by the skill and attention they habitually devote to the pursuit of such small domestic industries as are open to them, especially foot-binding; and

(3.) The labourers themselves to be rich with in Westford—at all events in the two principal baronies of Peeth and Bary—are, as a general rule, I think, superior in their habits of industry and self-control to any other that have as yet come under my notice, either in Thomestown Union or elsewhere.

63. I have in paragraph 24 quoted extracts from the evidence supplied to me by some highly competent witnesses, giving the results of their own information on this last head in Thomestown Union, and it is to be feared that, to a considerable degree at least, it is to the causes there indicated we must look for an explanation of the condition of depression to which some of the constabulary reports testify as at present prevailing amongst the agricultural labourers in certain districts, notwithstanding the many substantial and respectable improvements in their surroundings experienced by these classes generally, in every part of this union, during recent years.

64. In every district visited by me, without exception, representations were addressed to me by labourers as to the wretchedness of their present home accommodation, and their desire to obtain a union cottage, and, from the evidence I have quoted on this point from experienced and trustworthy witnesses, as well as, to a certain extent, from my own personal observation, I have no doubt that, in a great measure at least, the statements made to me were reasonable and well founded.

65. It has been seen, however, in the course of this report that the board of guardians are already largely bestowing themselves in this matter, and on a tolerably extensive scale, too, and if, in addition to this, the farmers and others under whom the labourers hold their present houses could only be aroused to a sense of their simple duty to repair and keep them in a habitable and sanitary condition—a duty it is to be feared as farmers generally and more culpably shirked—the grounds of complaint which are now urged, and partly urged in many quarters, upon this important subject, would speedily disappear.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
(Signed) W. P. O'DRISCOLL,
Assistant Commissioner.

Thomestown and
Westford
Unions.
Village
farming.
Continuity of employ-
ment.
Wages.

Cottage.

Constitu-
tion and
size of the
labourers.

Free
Assess-
ment
Borough
Union.
Cottage
labourers
Borough
Union.

The
wives
of the
labourers.

Domestic
industries.

Riches
of the
labourers.

Causes of
depression
of a large
number of
labourers.

Improvement
of cottage
accommodation.

Union
cottage.

Repair of
houses of
labourers.

APPENDIX A.

RETURN OF CONTRACT PRICES FOR WORKHOUSE SUPPLIES.

I. FOOD AND NECESSARIES.

	1881.	1892.	
Butter	4 4. 6. 9 1 28	4 4. 6. 0 2 30	Per lb.
White Bread	0 0 0	0 0 4	Per 4 lb. loaf.
Brown Bread	0 0 4	0 0 2	"
Onion	12 8 0	11 0 8	Per ton.
Indian Meal	0 8 8	1 0 8	"
Bees	0 16 8	0 16 0	Per cart.
New Milk	0 0 0	0 0 0	Per gall.
Tea	0 3 8	0 1 8	Per lb.
Cocoa	0 0 12	0 0 11	"
Sugar	1 0 0	0 8 2	"
Eggs	0 1 0	0 1 0	Per dozen.
Beef, without bone . .	0 8 0	0 0 5	Per lb.
Mutton, without bone .	0 8 0	0 0 5	"
Best Houghs	0 1 8	0 0 12	Each.
Or Houghs	0 1 1	0 0 10	"
Apples	0 15 0	0 16 0	Per cwt.
Dry Candles	0 0 4	0 0 4	Per lb.
Mould Candles	0 0 9	0 0 4	"
Newport Coal	0 18 9	0 20 0	Per ton.
Kilnsey Coal	Not used.	1 8 0	"

FOOD AND NECESSARIES—continued.

	1881.	1892.	
Whisky	4 4. 4. 0 10 1	4 4. 4. 0 10 0	Per gall.
Wine (Muscov)	0 15 12	0 16 0	Per dozen.
Wine (Port)	—	1 5 0	"
Porter	0 2 38	0 2 0	"
Brandy XXX	—	0 2 0	"

II. CLOTHING AND REPAIRS.

	1881.	1892.	
Tweed	4 4. 4. 0 0 0	4 4. 4. 0 2 0	Per yard.
Blankets	0 11 4	0 10 0	Per pair.
Shoes	0 6 0	0 6 0	Each.
Shirting Cotton	0 0 12	0 0 11	Per yard.
Flannel	0 1 2	0 1 3	"
Check	0 0 14	0 0 8	"
Flannel	0 1 4	0 4 6	"
Corduroy	0 1 30	0 1 8	"
Yarn	0 0 5	0 0 12	"
Knitting Cotton	—	0 1 0	Per lb.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

I R E L A N D.

R E P O R T

BY

MR. W. P. O'BRIEN, C.B.
(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER),

UPON THE

POOR LAW UNION OF KILMALLOCK
(COUNTIES LIMERICK AND CORK).

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APPENDIX A.

Contract prices for provisions supplied to workhouse in 1893 and 1894.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

To GEOFFREY DRAKE, Esq., Secretary,
Royal Commission on Labour.

Mockstown, Co. Dublin,
6th April 1893

Sir,

1. I have the honour to report, for the information of the Royal Commission on Labour that, in pursuance of the arrangement previously made, I proceeded to Kilmallock on the 10th ultimo, and was there engaged, from that time until the 31st ultimo, in the prosecution of my inquiry into the conditions and circumstances under which the agricultural labourer lives and works in that Union at the present time.

2. I immediately took the steps usually followed by me, as detailed in previous reports, to invite the co-operation of such representatives of the various classes of the local community as seemed likely to feel interested in the subject of my proceedings, and as might be willing to lend their practical assistance in furtherance of them; and I may be permitted to acknowledge here the willingness and readiness with which the information I sought for was, in numerous instances, supplied to me by those to whom I had so appealed.

3. On the 16th ultimo I attended the first meeting of the Board of Guardians which was held after my arrival in the Union, when I took the opportunity of explaining to the several members present the present nature and scope of my mission there, and had the advantage of hearing in return, in the course of a long discussion which ensued, the general drift of the opinions entertained by them on such of the respective heads to which my inquiry was directed.

4. In addition to the valuable assistance thus received from the full Board, I have to express my sense of special obligation to the Chairman and other members of the body, as well as to the Clerk of the Union, his very intelligent assistant, and other Union officers for much useful and necessary information subsequently supplied to me by them in the course of my investigation.

5. This record of my obligations would, however, be altogether incomplete if I failed to add the further acknowledgment of the cordial co-operation I have in this, as in all previous cases, experienced at the hands of the officers and men of the Royal Irish Constabulary, in facilitating my proceedings, and refreshing me with important details in each of the localities it became necessary for me to visit in the execution of my task.

6. In the course of my proceedings, I attended by special appointment, for the purpose of taking the evidence of both labourers and farmers at the following series of public hearings, viz., Hospital in the north-west of the Union, Bruff in the north-west, Kilmallock in the center, Kilmacross in the south-east, Branes in the west, and Charleville in the south-west.

In each of these districts, as well as in some others, I likewise made an extensive contribution of the labourers' houses, both in town and country, and endeavoured by every means open to me to inform myself fully as to the circumstances and the general surroundings of themselves and those dependent on them.

7. In accordance with the practice hitherto followed by me in this respect, I take leave to submit here some preliminary observations explanatory of the general circumstances and characteristics of the district now under review.

8. There are three Poor Law Unions which are wholly, and four others which are only partially included within the territorial limits of the county Limerick.

Kilmallock, which is situated in the south-eastern angle of the county, is one of the latter. Though mainly comprised in the county Limerick, it embraces, also, within its boundaries a part of the northern extremity of the adjoining county of Cork, including Charleville, the largest town in the Union.

It is an entirely inland district, consisting of, in all, 28 separate electoral divisions, of which 24 are in Limerick and 4 constituting its south-western angle, in Cork.

The boundaries are—North Limerick Union, South Limerick Union, East Tipperary and Mitchelstown Unions and West, the Unions of Kenilworth and Croon.

The area of the entire Union is 145,148 acres, of which 124,765, or more than six-eighths, belong to Limerick, and 19,884, or less than one-seventh, to Cork.

The Poor Law valuation is 157,298¹/₂, which being divided into the area and population is equivalent to a little more than an average of 18s. 11d. per acre, and of 41. 17s. 8d. per head of the population, now reduced to 33,163, as against 32,510, the Census return for 1881, and 35,471 in 1871; thus being equivalent to a reduction of 6,447, or 18.6 per cent., and 7,608, or 20.6 per cent., of the previous population within the two last decades respectively.

The total number of rated holdings in the Union is 6,284, which, if divided into the area and valuation, gives for each an average of 23 acres in extent, with a valuation of 25l. 5s. 5d.

9. The general physical features of this Union are upon the whole more uniform than those encountered in most other parts of the country. Except in the mountainous district lying to the south of the Union, the surface of the County is singularly level, only slightly diversified in particular localities by small hills and considerable undulations of the soil.

In the south-eastern section of the Union, however, of which the town of Kilmacross may be considered the centre and focus, the country becomes hilly and uneven, and it is bordered in that quarter by a range of lofty mountains.

10. The soil of this Union is for the most part a deep heavy loam, of excellent quality, and especially adapted to the purpose to which it is chiefly devoted, namely, the production of wheat, and, to a lesser degree, the rearing and fattening of sheep, cattle, &c.

The average valuation of the entire Union is only a fraction under 19s. per acre, but this average would be considerably exceeded, if it may be ascertained, were it not for the marked inferiority of the soil in the mountainous districts lying to the north, and in which a striking contrast is presented in this respect, to what is experienced throughout by far the greater part of the Union.

In illustration of this disparity I give here an extract from the rate books—the valuation and area of each of the five best and the five least favourably circumstanced electoral divisions respectively, omitting those in which towns are included, viz.—

No. 1.—Inferior Soil.

Electoral Division.	Area.	Valuation.	Valuation per Acre.
Parteen	Acres 9462	£ 1,092	£ s. d. 11 5 4
Kilryna	4318	1,058	6 7 8
Groton	1,540	1,403	9 7 4
Dunash	4,058	1,509	3 6 4
Ballinacorney	6,024	4,057	6 10 0

No. 2.—Superior Soil.

Electoral Division.	Area.	£	£ s. d.
Ballinacorney	3,070	6,493	21 4 4
Knocknag	4,020	5,778	14 7
Kilryna	5,061	7,284	14 3
Ballinacorney	4,058	6,072	14 9
Ballinacorney	1,770	6,269	35 6
Entire Union	145,148	157,298 ¹ / ₂	10 18 11

R.-EX.
KILMARNOCK
LOCAL
Geological
formation.

Ch. Clerk
section.

Coal Meas-
ures of
this form.

Iron of
this form.

Qualified
person.

Special
person.
Kilmar-
nock.

Witness.

He-
-

Witness.

Kilmar-
nock.

11. Though the soil of the county Linneick portion of the Union rests mainly on carboniferous limestone, this is found to be occasionally diversified in certain districts, as about Kilmarnock and other places, by beds of Old Red Sandstone, and, to a limited extent, Lower Silurian is also encountered in the south-eastern angle of the Union, limestone is, however, by far the predominating element.

In the county Cork section the limestone formation is also largely encountered, extending over to and around the town of Charleville, in the barony of Ormeau and Kilmarnock, and to a considerable distance to the south of it, but an area of the Coal Measures of Dublin to which I had occasion to make special reference in paragraph 10 of my report on Kanturk Union, extends into this barony, also, through the villages of Milford, Dromas, and Shendron, and through Milforda electoral division, as far as Springfield, close to the west of Charleville. In the remaining electoral division in the county Cork Section of the Union—Drishnagh—though the northern side rests on limestone, the southern portion, along the base of the Ballymore Hills, is on the Old Red Sandstone.

The land, it may be observed, in this quarter of the Union, about Charleville—that is—the land on the limestone formation—is very good and rich, but where the Coal Measures are encroached, it becomes cold and wet, as in the case of the land constituting the western side of Kanturk Union, of the inferiority of which an illustration will be found in paragraph 13 of my report dealing with that Union.

12. The farms, except for the worst part, in extent from about 20 to 60 Irish acres; from 40 to 50 would probably be about the general average, but outside these limits are, of course, to be found many very small holdings, and also several farms of considerable size, say, 300 or 400 acres.

In this connection it may be noted that the qualification for common jurors in this Union is 40L in the country and 10L in the towns, and that there are 1,000 qualified under these limits, of whom 221, or not far short of one-fourth of the number, possess the higher qualification of 100L enabling them to serve as special jurors.

13. The farming pursued throughout the entire of this Union is that of dairying, in conjunction with the raising of calves and pigs, and the fattening of sheep and dry stock, &c., but butter-making is, at the present time, altogether the chief feature in the system here followed, as may be judged from the fact that as many as 13 creameries are now in active operation in different parts of the Union; while tillage-farming, which some 25 or 30 years ago played a more or less important part in the agricultural management of the district, may be regarded as being now, for the most part, and in every quarter referred to the extinction of what is absolutely indispensable to meet the requirements of the farmers, very frequently not extending even so far as this.

Though in one or two constabulary reports furnished to me the proportion of the farms said to be under tillage is given as 1-10th to 1-15th, this is altogether exceptional, and in the great majority it has been retained at from 1-25th to 1-40th; and the evidence taken by me, as well as my personal observation in driving through the different localities, tended to entirely confirm the general accuracy of these latter estimates. Even farms of 300 to 400 acres have scarcely now more than six to eight acres under crops, while in many cases it falls considerably under this, very often not exceeding from two to four acres, and even less.

The crops cultivated consist mainly of oats, some wheat, potatoes, turnips, and mangolds, but the quantity of hay grown for the winter feeding of the stock is very considerable, as may be inferred from the fact that in the case of one farm of 250 Irish acres visited by me, the owner informed me he found it necessary to devote about 80 to 90 acres every year to this purpose.

14. While this Union may be described as an essentially rural one, there being no urban district of considerable population or commercial prominence included within its limits, there are still some towns met with of sufficient local importance to be noted here.

The five principal towns are—Charleville, population 1,500; Kilmarnock, 1,175; Kilmallock, 1,120; Beauf, 658; and Hospital, 635, in addition to which there are the villages of Droine, 353; Lisnabreena, 296; Kaseekany, 157; and some others of smaller extent.

Of these Charleville is the most considerable, in regard both as to trade and size, but Kilmallock, situated on a small stream called the Ladoch, which from its geographical position is to be regarded as the local capital of the fish trade in the centre of which it stands, greatly exceeds all the others both in point of antiquity and the very interesting associations that attach to its early history;

the ruins of which, still extant in the numerous and strikingly beautiful ruins by which it is surrounded, having been pronounced by high antiquarian authority to be such as to entitle it to be regarded as "the Basilica of Ireland."

Of these ruins the chief are those of a church, formerly collegiate, dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul, and a Dominican Friary, founded in 1291 with an ample endowment, and which continued to flourish from that time until the dissolution of the monasteries.

The early history of Kilmallock is involved in great obscurity, but it was undoubtedly a place of importance at a period long anterior to the Norman Invasion, and is later times it was intimately associated with the varying fortunes of the Desmond. It is certain that it was a fortified town at the end of the 13th century, being surrounded by a wall of great strength and thickness, and entered by four separate gates, of which several traces still remain.

Three centuries later than this period it is described as being then "a place of much importance and considerable wealth," but with the vicissitudes of time came subsequently, in these respects, a sad and mighty change in its fortunes and history, and so recently as the year 1836 it has been described as being then a place "exhibiting the "affluence of a ruined and desolated city."

Assuming this latter description to convey an accurate representation of the condition of things prevailing at the period to which it relates, it is satisfactory to note at the present time that a very considerable revival of its former life has taken place in the interval, and that, without laying claim to any special prominence in the commercial world, it may be now referred to as a fairly busy and thriving country town of the class of which it belongs.

15. The ownership of property in this Union is considerably divided, there being no single estate of special prominence to be noted.

The principal proprietors appear to be Lord Castlemore, Lord Linneick, Lord Langford, Lord Cork, Lord Fermoy, Lord Early, Count de Selis, Captain Geacogne, Mr. Trevel, Colonel Deane, Sir David Roche, and Mr. Brexton.

There appear to be very few amongst these who can be considered as belonging to the class of landlords resident in the Union, but some of them have residences in other parts of the county.

16. Owing to the exceptionally large extent to which the premises of the Labourers' Buildings Acts have been applied to this Union, the distribution of the labourers, with reference to proximity to their work, appears to be upon the whole satisfactory.

Of those who have not yet succeeded in obtaining cottages here, are concentrated in the towns and villages, and others are dispersed over the farms; but though there may be found occasional individual cases of exception to the rule, it is probable that the labourers generally in this Union are not unfavourably circumstanced in this respect in the rural districts. In the towns the case is somewhat different, of course, and as regards the labourers belonging to that category, complaints, probably not unfounded, are sometimes made as to the hardship often endured under this head.

17. The financial position of this Union, considered with reference to its liabilities of a public nature, is, upon the whole, not unfavourable.

Though the county Linneick portion of the Union is mainly situated in the two baronies of Corkina and Coshin, it also embraces portions of four others; and in the case of the county Cork, though the barony of Ormeau and Kilmarnock is by far the greater part of that section of the Union, the barony of Fermoy is also to a limited extent included within the limits.

Of the eight baronies referred to the following, so far as I have been able to ascertain, are the percentages of the rates assessed during the last year, viz.—

Barony.	Total Percentage for last Twelve Months
Corkina	6 1/2
Coshin	1 1/4
Corkina, Upper	1 1/2
Coonagh	1 1/2
Kilmallock	1 1/2
Small Ormeau	1 1/2
Ormeau and Kilmarnock	1 1/2
Fermoy	1 1/4

The
Baronies
of
Corkina
and
Coshin
are
the
only
ones
of
this
kind.

104.

105.

106.

107.

108.

The
Agricultural
Labourer.
Poor rate.
Seed Supply
Act.

to children of
poor rate.

The poor rate for the present year ranges from a minimum of 1s. 3d. to a maximum of 5s. 3d., the average being 2s. or a fraction over it.

In addition to this, however, a second instalment of the dues due by individual ratepayers under the Seed Supply Act, 1890-91, and amounting to 1,470*l.*, remains still to be discharged, but for this liability full provision appears to have been made in the current rate, and the amount will be duly metted to Government within the limit of sums permitted for the purpose.

18. The following are the statistics of pauperism at the present time and at the corresponding date of 1883, viz. —

	1883.	1893.
Number in workhouse	—	—
Number on outdoor relief	1,604	1,176
Total	1,604	1,176
General average cost of maintenance per week	5 10	5 00

From these figures it will be observed that within the decade quoted a substantial decrease has taken place both in the number of workhouse inmates and of the recipients of outdoor relief, amounting in the former case to about 38 per cent., and in the latter to over 10 per cent. of the previous numbers.

The cost of maintenance, on the other hand, exhibits, it has been seen, an increase of 5*d.* per head weekly, notwithstanding that the contract prices for the two periods, as given in Appendix A, are distinctly more favourable at the present time than in 1883.

The explanation of this seeming anomaly would appear to be that in the interval, owing most probably to the growing confidence reposed in the Sectors of Mersey as the means, the sick poor of the Union, much the most expensive class of workhouse inmates, have availed themselves of the hospital of the institution in considerably increased numbers as compared with former times.

In 1883, when the total number of inmates was 702, the number in hospital was only 149, or about 21 per cent. of the entire; while in 1893, when the total number has fallen to 115, as many as 174, or about 38 per cent., are returned as being under treatment in hospital.

It is also not improbable, I think, that contemporaneously with this increase in the number of sick inmates, some improvement in the diet of this class may have likewise taken place.

19. This concludes the preliminary observations that have suggested themselves to me as likely to prove useful, as a preface to the report itself, and which I shall now take leave to submit under the usual heads.

L.—SUPPLY OF LABOUR.

20. During the spring, hay, harvest, and other busy seasons there can be no doubt that, as a result of the large drain of the population caused by the emigration of recent years, the supply of ordinary labourers now locally available is entirely inadequate to meet the exigencies of the farmers in Kilmallock Union, and were it not for the aid they very generally derive from the introduction of machinery on the outlying and saving of hay and other operations, it is stated by them that they "could not get on at all," a representation which there is every reason to accept as a fairly accurate description of the state of things at the present time prevailing.

This being, as already described, a district in which tillage farming may be said to be all but abandoned there it is stated, little employment to be had by agricultural labourers during the winter months, and strong complaints as to the severe privations resulting from this have been advanced to me on numerous instances, and in different quarters.

The farmers, however, on the other hand, in many cases, though by no means in all, allege that labourers who are industrious and willing to accept reasonable wages need not be idle in any part of the country, and that their own neglect to do many things which they should have done is largely in want of spring labour from the impossibility of finding labourers able and willing to do the work on any terms which would render it at all remunerative to the employer.

21. This being one of the points as to which the widest divergence of view is usually experienced as between labourers and farmers, I quote here, with reference to it, the testimony of a witness who belongs to neither class, but is a most active and intelligent land agent, enjoying the fullest facilities for forming an impartial estimate of the actual facts in an important division of the Union. He says as to this:—

"From 1st November to 1st March the employment of the labourers is very casual. The farmers as a rule only hire them when absolutely necessary. Useful work, such as drilling, fencing, and cleaning dikes and watercourses, is greatly neglected, much to the injury of the land."

"May and June are also somewhat 'slack' months for the labourers, but from the 15th July to near the end of October they have fairly constant work, sowing and reaping hay, and digging potatoes."

The usual allegation encountered here from very many of the labourers is that they are absolutely without employment for more than half of the year, with the exception of odd days; and the testimony just quoted from a most competent as well as a most unbiassed witness is, it will be observed, substantially corroborative of the justice of the labourers' complaint; while it is to be added that the information received by me from so thoroughly reliable a source as the local notary-at-law tends strongly, for the most part, in the same direction.

22. In only one of the reports is it represented that all the labourers in the district can find constant employment, throughout the year, while in the others the proportion of those who are unable to do so is variously estimated at from one-fifth to one-sixth to three-fourths and upwards of the entire number; but from these estimates, of course, a large deduction must be made for those who from old age and infirmity can be considered as little more than labourers in name, and who could only expect to be engaged at any time in cases of urgent necessity on the side of employers.

The least favourable reports as to this usually come, as might be anticipated, from the town districts, where labourers are concentrated in the largest numbers, but though constant and regular employment is less accessible to this class than to others, it may be fairly asserted, I think, on the other hand, as some compensation for this, that they enjoy opportunities of finding, from time to time, odd jobs of a miscellaneous kind, more or less highly paid, which do not present themselves to those permanently located in the rural districts.

23. The observations just made relate to the ordinary class of agricultural labourers, but there remains to be noted the case of the resident farm servants, both male and female, who in this essentially dairy district constitute an altogether exceptionally important and important body.

The particular class being that from which the recent stream of emigration to America has been chiefly supplied, it is found practically impossible to meet the demand for them from any local sources, and it has accordingly now become the established usage of the country to obtain them annually by importation from the eastern border of Kerry, and the adjoining districts of West Cork.

24. These arrangements, consisting of both young men and women—the latter greatly the predominant element—usually arrive by train at Kilmallock on certain days in March—notably on the 17th and 22nd of the month—when they are met at the railway station by the farmers from all the surrounding districts, and amidst a scene of unwearied animation and bustle, are at once engaged by them, and then and there borne off to their respective homes.

There they then remain until about the 20th of the following December, when they become entitled, under the terms of their engagement, to return to their own homes for the ensuing three months or so.

The number arriving annually at Kilmallock in the manner just described amounts, so far as I have been able to ascertain, to about 300, probably more, and they receive for the term—nine months—over which the engagement extends, wages of from 11*l.* to 14*l.*, according to qualifications, being found in everything, and living in the houses of their employers. They receive an excellent diet, which includes meat (home-cured bacon) on three days in the week, and bread and tea twice daily.

The girls' duties chiefly consist in milking the cows, feeding the calves and pigs, and making themselves generally useful, one girl will have to milk probably eight to 10 cows twice daily and evening. The male servants take their share of these several duties also, and assist hands at the heavier work of the farm, &c.

25.—In addition to the arrangements just described, others of an entirely different kind, namely, the ordinary class of

R.—ED.
KILMALLOCK.

Endorsement.

Complete
1875-1893.

Young
labourers.

Resident
servants.

Emigration.

Immigrants.

Domestic
servants.

Master.

Wages.

Duties of
girls.

Male
servants.

Immigrants
of ordinary
day in
labourers.

8-12. KILMALLOCK. day labourers, are likewise imported into certain districts of Kilmallock Union, from the same quarter—Kerry and West Cork—during the months of September and October, for the harvest, and potato digging, &c.

Some few years back it was the general practice throughout the Union, I am informed, to avoid this help, but at the present time it appears to be in a great measure confined to the north eastern quarter, the district of which the town of Hoptal is the centre.

The labourers while so employed receive wages of from about 10s. to 12s. weekly, sometimes more, being fed and lodged by their employers; one of whom, farming 170 Irish acres, in his evidence before me at Hoptal stated as to this—

"If it were not for the Kerry labourers, who come into this district to harvest, the farmers would not get on at all, the labourers would not work for them."

The labourers, on the other hand, allege that a preference is given to these immigrants over themselves by the farmers, merely because they can exact from them what hours of labour they please, and not because they are otherwise better, or more willing workmen.

25. There is, I think, an almost universal consensus of opinion that the labourers have greatly declined in efficiency during the past 10 or 15 years, and as compared with other districts there is not perhaps much to choose in this respect, the cause which has led up to it, the emigration of the best and strongest of the class, having been pretty generally operative during the period in question in this part of Ireland.

II.—CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT.

27. The employment in this Union partakes largely of both character being in part regular and continuous, and in part, as has been shown, casual and intermittent, but even in those cases where it takes the form of the engagement, as a rule, only by the day, or more commonly by the week, save in the case of resident farm labourers.

In these latter cases the hiring is usually by the quarter, half-year or year, but, in regard to the branch of this class which is made up of immigrants from the adjoining counties, the engagement runs, as already explained, for a term of nine months.

28. The hours of labour are usually from either 6 or 7 a.m. to 6 or 7 p.m. in the summer time, and in the winter from 7.30 or 8 a.m. to 4.30 or 5 p.m., with an allowance for such rain varying from half-an-hour to an hour, but where the labourer is dictated by the farmer it is probable that no very strict rule is followed in this respect, and labourers frequently complain, with what justice I cannot pronounce, that they are hardly granted time enough to swallow their food.

The hours generally observed would probably be from 8 to 11 hours in summer, and 7 or 7½ to 8 hours in the winter season.

29. Sunday labour may be said to be everywhere restricted to such work as is from its nature indispensable, and in, in a great measure, performed by the class of labourers who are boarded and lodged by their employers, with certain special exceptions, such as husbandmen, horsemen, &c.

III.—WAGES AND EARNINGS.

30. In the towns districts the labourers here are, for the most part, paid entirely in money, in the rural districts too daily meals are usually supplied, except in the cases of resident gentry or large or non-resident farmers.

In the former case, where the employment is continuous, the wages generally paid are 10s. to 11s. weekly, where not continuous this would be about the winter scale, but in spring-time it would rise to 12s., and in harvest often to a good deal over that, according to circumstances, which necessarily vary much.

Where food is given (two meals) the general scale is from 6s. to 7s. weekly, 7s. being probably the average, but in spring-time, where the engagement was not continuous, this would usually rise to 9s. per week, and in harvest still higher, say, 10s.

31. In the case of rural labourers who are permanently retained by the same employer special perquisites are sometimes given in addition to their wages, as a free house, free potato ground, milk, or the grant of a few sheep, &c.; but these are, it is to be pointed out, special cases, and are not to be regarded as being at all the rule; and the same observation applies to individual cases in which, for special reasons, a rule of wages, in excess of the general amount here specified, is sometimes granted.

Resident farm servants get from 10l. or 11l. a year up to 14l., and in certain special cases 16l. a year, being at the same time both lodged and boarded by their employers.

32. There is little or no piece-work to be noted in any part of this Union.

33. In hay-time and harvest the labourers usually called in are usually paid by the day, and the wages paid to them range from 2s. 6d. to 4s. and even 5s. a day, as in the case of mowers, or other specially qualified hands.

There are no perquisites or allowances given in aid of wages in this Union, save in certain special cases, as already described.

34. The general annual rate of earnings by the class of labourers who are in constant employment may be thus stated—

Ordinary labourers, without food	26l.	to 31l. 4s.
" " with " "	15l. 12s.	20l. 16s.
Skilled " without " "	31l. 4s.	
Resident " " "	11l.	14l.

Women and boys would probably when employed in busy seasons earn 2s. 6d. a day and 8s. weekly respectively, but their work is of a very casual nature, and does not admit of a reliable seasonal estimate of its amount being given.

35. In illustration of what has been just described the particulars of a few typical cases, taken from the evidence given before me, may be here quoted, viz.—

A magistrate residing in a neighbouring county, but having a large dairy farm in Kilmallock Union, thus details his labour arrangements:—

"I have about 500 acres (statute). My farming is mixed, dairy and dry stock—chiefly dairy. I usually have from 5 to 8 acres of tillage—this year 8 acres. My crops are oats, wheat, potatoes, turnips, and mangolds, all for use on the farm; hay, 80 to 90 acres.

"I employ permanently 4 women and 6 men—10 in all. Of the former one woman gets 16s. a year, all found; and the other three 11s. each for nine months' work, all found.

"Of the men, one (a husbandman) gets 12s. a week all the year, with free house, one quarter acre of garden mowed and tilled by me, with grass for a cow and two or three sheep; two others get 13s. a week, all found; and the remaining three get 11s. and 10s. a week respectively, with one quarter acre of garden mowed and tilled for them; one of them also gets in addition a free house, and another is allowed milk.

"Between July and November I employ far, say, 84 months, 10 extra men for cutting, sowing, and mowing hay, thrashing corn, digging potatoes, &c., these all receive 14s. a week each with milk, nothing else.

"During hay mowing 10 additional hands are called in for a few days, receiving each 4s. a day during that time, but without food.

"The four women and two men, who are all found by me, receive for breakfast bread and milk with an allowance of 1l. each in lieu of tea; dinner, potatoes and milk, and, on three days in the week, meat with potatoes and vegetables, and for supper, potatoes and milk.

"They sometimes get butter at one meal, and are found in soap, blacking, &c."

In one of the principal towns districts a prominent and useful employer of labour thus says:—

"I have 150 Irish acres, and I have also large water-power and steam mills, flour, oatmeal, and saw mills.

"I have three or four permanent employees at the farm. They get 10s. to 11s. a week each, without diet.

"The labourers here generally get breakfast, no perquisites or houses. They get 2s. and 2s. 6d. a day in hay and harvest times, and even 3s. a day for a week or two.

Those employed by me at the mills get the same scale all the year round, 10s. to 11s. a week; the miller gets 27s. and the baker 24s. a week.

36. An experienced land steward in an important district in the western side of the Union thus details his arrangements. He says—

"I manage over 200 Irish acres altogether.

"There are about nine permanent labourers employed, sometimes more, never less.

"Some of the old hands—ploughmen included—get 11s. a week, with free house and small garden, wet and dry, holidays and sickness, with several presents at Christmas. The others get 10s. a week, some have no houses, and others have.

"Extra hands in busy times get 2s. and 2s. 6d. a day.

"All without diet, except when working on distant farms, when they get two meals, but that is an exceptional arrangement."

One further quotation will suffice on this head.

A working farmer in the county Cork side of the Union

says:—

"I farm 121 Irish acres, and have 32 under plantation. Duty farming—8 tillage 7 acres, but not so much last year."

"I have two resident servant boys and two servant maids, with a boy who gets his wages, and one workman beside."

"The resident boys get 12L and 10L, respectively, at farm; and the girls 12L and 7L 10s. The workman gets one quarter acre of free ground, the grant of three goats and 6s. 6d. a week wages, and dist all the year."

"In harvest I have extra hands at 2s. 6d. a day with dist and now (March) I pay them 3s. a week with dist."

IV.—COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.

37. It in the first Union reported on by me for the purposes of the Royal Commission on Labour—Kinnear—had occasion to observe upon the fact that no effect whatever had been there given up to that time to the various legislative provisions enacted 1883-91 with reference to the erection of dwelling, for the labouring class, I have now, in the prosecution of the inquiry extended to me, reached the particular Union in which that effect has been given in the largest and fullest measure that has been experienced in any part of Ireland.

38. The total number of cottages for the section of which the necessary official authority was obtained is 544, this being the largest number as yet approved in any union in Ireland.

Of these 466 have been already completed and occupied, the remainder having been for various causes, with the particulars of which I am not acquainted, unavoidably abandoned, but a fresh scheme providing for 350 more has been recently submitted, and already officially inspected, and now only awaits the decision of the proper authorities for its final ratification.

39. The full cost of the cottages erected has not yet been precisely ascertained, but it is estimated to be about 130L for each, or about 58,930L in all.

40. The rents, which are, it is satisfactory to learn, as a rule, paid with reasonable punctuality, only amount in each case to 2L 8s. per annum; and as the charge on the rates for interest, cost of collection, repairs, &c. is estimated to come to about 7L 5s. 6d., this it will be seen represents an annual loss to the Union of about 3L 1s. 6d. for each cottage, a fact which speaks sufficiently for the liberal and even generous spirit in which the Kinnear Board of Guardians appear to have addressed themselves to the task of redressing the serious grievances of which it is admitted, apparently on all hands, the labourers in this Union had previously and for a long time much just reason to complain.

41. The cottages built are of the usual type and size as described in previous reports, but in those erected under the first scheme mentioned, and which included 280 out of the 460, no provision was made for selling the lifts, and hence complaints of cold experienced in consequence of this omission are loud and frequent, as I can testify from my personal experience.

The guardians have, however, I am glad to find, been taking steps to remedy the original error committed as to this, and in a short time it is expected no ground for complaint on this head will remain.

42. Notwithstanding the extensive operations that have already, as is described, taken place here in connexion with this subject, numerous representations as to the very inferior houses still occupied by many of the labourers, both in towns and the rural districts, continue to be constantly urged from different quarters, and the evidence given before me by, amongst other witnesses, farmers as well as labourers, as well as personal observation, leave, in my mind, no room to doubt that the statements so made are, to a large extent at least, perfectly well founded in fact, the available accommodation after consisting of a single and very wretched room, having no garden even attached to it.

43. When, however, the fresh scheme—which, as already explained, is at present under consideration—reaches maturity there will, I confidently anticipate, be no room left in any part of the Union for reasonable complaint in connexion with this important subject.

V.—GARDENS AND ALLOTMENTS.

44. From the extent to which, as just described, the Kinnear Board of Guardians have availed themselves of the provisions of the Dwellings Acts, the number of labourers here who are in possession of plots of ground for the production of potatoes and other crops suitable for domestic use is exceptionally large.

45. In addition to this it has been seen that large numbers sometimes give to their permanent labourers one quarter of an acre of free ground for the same purpose.

In some of the other Unions visited by me it appeared that the farmers were commonly very glad to give the labourers the great boon of a much one-acre potato ground as they were able to manage, without looking for any return beyond the benefit to be derived by their land from this.

Here, however, the natural richness of the soil makes the farmers to a great extent quite independent of this resource, and as a rule, when it can be got at all, such ground can only be obtained at a rent of about 10L per acre, which in the case of the majority of the labourers may be considered to be almost prohibitive.

It has been seen from my previous reports that the provisions contained in section 16 of 40 & 43 Vict. c. 77, and section 12 of 43 and 50 Vict. c. 59, enabling Boards of Guardians to supply rural allotments of half an acre in extent for the accommodation of agricultural labourers resident in any neighbouring town or village, have, so far, remained practically inoperative in each of the several Unions hitherto visited by me.

46. Hence, for the first time, I have met with an exception to the rule, but as yet the application of their legal powers in this direction by the Board of Guardians has been both too recent and too limited to admit of any judgment being formed as to its working and utility.

But labourers resident in the town of Kinnearlock have been provided in the immediate neighbourhood with allotments of the statutory extent of half an acre at a yearly rent of 1L each, but whether or not it is contemplated to further extend the measure I am unable to say.

47. There are no cow runs or pastures to be met with in any part of this Union, and the free stock in the possession of labourers may be said to be confined almost exclusively to pigs, poultry, and goats, for the keeping of which the cottages and plots, where held, afford greatly increased facilities, and which are accordingly to be now almost everywhere met with in considerable numbers.

48. Occasionally it is to be met with also a cow; but this is very rare, except in the case of herdsmen or other labourers of that class to whom grass for one may be allowed by the employer, and this only happens, as a rule, in the case of very large farmers.

49. There are no bees to be seen anywhere, and in fact the bee industry can hardly be said to be an Irish institution at all.

VI.—BENEFIT SOCIETIES.

50. Under this head I have to make the inevitable answer that no such societies are known in any part of the Union.

VII.—TRADE UNIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

51. Neither have any organizations coming under this category the slightest existence here.

VIII.—GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYED.

52. Nearly all the topics involved by me bearing on this subject represent the relations existing between the labourers and the farmers as being upon the whole good and even friendly.

There is certainly nothing like overt hostility anywhere manifested between them in this Union at the present time; but, if I were to find my judgment on the point upon what has come under my own personal notice, I should be disposed to conclude that, at bottom, the feeling mutually entertained is rather the reverse of a cordial one, the farmers in many instances complaining of the idleness and want of interest in their work on the part of the labourers, and the latter quite as frequently of the neglect and indifference of the farmers in supplying them with employment, &c.

IX.—THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

53. That as compared with the state of things which existed here 10 or 15 years ago the general condition of the labourers has undergone in several important respects a great improvement is, I think, scarcely open to question.

54. From all the information I have been able to collect on the subject the house accommodation of the estate class was then extremely and almost completely bad, while in the interval the houses in which they then resided have been largely replaced by the neat cottages, with attached plots, now met with in every direction when driving through the

B.—XX
Kinnear-
Lock.

Provisional
Cott. acco.

at 40 Vict.
c. 77, and
at 50 Vict.
c. 59.

Allotments.

Cow runs,
pastures, and
free stock.
Pigs, poultry,
and goats.

Cows.

Bees.

Benefit Societies.

Trade Unions of Agricultural Labourers.

General Relations between Employer and Employed.

Condition of the Agricultural Labourers.

Gardens and Allotments.

Cottages and Plots.

Working Farmers.

Unions.

Benefit Societies.

Trade Unions of Agricultural Labourers.

General Relations between Employer and Employed.

Condition of the Agricultural Labourers.

<p> RE-EX-AMINATION. Contingent advantages. Wages. Cost of maintenance. Work hours and meals. Evidence. Conclusion. May reports. Other testimony. Evidence of a single witness. Evidence of all houses. Character of Board of Guardians. Local agent. </p>	<p> different districts, and which it is obvious carry with them so many contingent advantages to the labourers both in the shape of food obtained from them for the support of their families, and in the increased facilities they afford for the prosecution of various small domestic industries, previously to a great extent beyond their reach. 55. To this as to be added the marked increase in the general scale of wages that obtains in the district, owing to competition—concomitantly with which has been experienced a sensible decline in the cost of many of the principal necessities of existence. In allusion to this latter point, I take leave to append hereto, marked A, a return furnished to me by the Clerk of the Union, and which gives in detail the prices paid in 1892 and 1893 respectively for the several articles of food, necessaries, clothing, and bedding supplied in those years for the use of the workhouse. 56. Notwithstanding these elements of improvement, it is to be regretted that the general drift of the testimony collected by me on the subject from the most reliable and authoritative sources accessible to me tends to indicate that the general state of things, at present prevailing in most parts of the Union, still remains very far from being satisfactory. 57. Of 12 reports received from the local constabulary on this point, eight describe the general condition of the labourers in their respective districts as being "Poor," "Bad in most instances," "Bad," "Miserable," "Very miserable," "Very poor," "Poor," "Poor," "Fair," "Fairly comfortable," where Union cottages are held, but in the other cases as being "Miserable" and "Bad." 58. To this testimony I take leave to add extracts from the communications addressed to me by some of the most competent and reliable witnesses on the point to be forced in the Union. A magistrate, longly engaged in agriculture in this country, where he has been long established, and is widely respected, says as to this— "His (the labourer's) condition has improved of late years, so much better housed. But the want of constant work keeps him still from hand to mouth, and generally he has to wear out a hard winter on the ground. "The day women have now high wages, from 10s. to 15s. a season which generally ceases in the month. "If the farmers would only drain more in the Union than they do the labourers case would improve. "It is the want of constant work, in my opinion, that has done so many of our young people of both sexes from us, and still continues doing so. A gentleman coming in the largest town in the union, where he is largely engaged in both agricultural and agricultural pursuits, and who was specially commended to me as the very highest and most reliable authority on the subject to be found in the district, says— "The general condition of the agricultural labourers is far from being satisfactory, the employer's own condition being so miserable that he cannot afford to labour actively in these his costly employments. "Agriculturists employ just as far as they possibly can, for the simple reason that they cannot afford to pay wages in many cases, so neither what advantages may be ultimately derived from an expenditure on labour. "Because the labourer's living is uncertain; his fare is bad, owing to the uncertainty of employment, the last time, owing to the many wet days through the year, the low rate of wages at certain times of the season, and the total want of employment when his services are not required. He cannot afford home comforts or decent clothing for himself or his family, and when he gets beyond his work he has nothing to look to but the workhouse." The Chairman of the Board of Guardians, who is an experienced man of business, and particularly well acquainted with the affairs of the district generally, when courteously furnishing replies to the several queries addressed to him by me, adds the expression of the following opinion under this head. He says— "I think that the labourer's condition cannot be improved much until the pasture land is tilled, or every farmer is obliged to keep a proportion of his farm tilled for green and other crops. "The further question will, I think, suffice as to this. A local agent already quoted on another point—paragraph 21—says on this subject— "The general condition of the agricultural labourer in this Union has improved enormously of late years, and a sober, industrious man can now maintain himself and his family in comfort." </p>	<p> THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS. Labourers. Greenhouses. Single cottages. "Properly." "Co-operative." Operations. Examples of production. Weekly wages. Separation of milk. Hiding (dairy). Kiln-dried. Charcoal. Other milk. Mould. Operations. </p>
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of some of the labourers in the neighbourhood of Kilmallock I found that several of the younger members of their families were so employed, and were in this way able to cash and about 8s. weekly to their other resources.

X.—CONCLUSION.

68. Having, under each separate head dealt with in the course of this report, exhausted all the information in my power to supply in connexion with them, it only remains that I should now in closing add a few words in the way of a summary.

69. In most of the Eastern hushies dealt with by me the leading grievance complained of by the labourers had reference to their defective house accommodation, and the desire for a plot of ground to produce food for their families, &c.

In this Union, no doubt, the same demand, though on a very diminished scale, is met with also, but having regard to what has been already accomplished in this way by the Board of Guardians it is clear they do not here require to be specially stimulated in the discharge of this duty.

One of the representations most urged upon me here by the labourers was, I may observe, that the houses when built were not given to the most needy, or the most deserving of the applicants, but were secured by favour, private interest, and other objectionable considerations. In these representations there may be some justice—I cannot pronounce an opinion as to this—but it is clear that so long as a large public body, such as a Board of Guardians, is invested with the duty of deciding such questions, it must be always extremely difficult to control, by any extraneous authority, the use they are fit to make of the discretionary power entrusted to them by the Legislature.

69. The chief complaint in this Union is, however, the want of constant employment for the labourers during

several months of the year, owing to a great measure to the exceedingly and exceptionally limited area now devoted by the farmers to the purposes of tillage, but there is, I apprehend, very little room to hope for any change of arrangement in this respect, under existing conditions.

It is, no doubt, justly urged, that the land of the country is rapidly deteriorating from the want of many things now entirely neglected, and which, if executed, would largely as well as progressively extend the field of labour, but it is to be feared that an insurmountable obstacle is presented as yet at all events immediate movement in this direction by what has been so well stated as to this in the quotation already given in paragraph 42, viz., that the farmers "CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY WAGES "NO MATTER WHAT ADVANTAGES MAY BE ULTIMATELY DERIVED FROM AN EXPENDITURE ON LABOUR"—a proposition which few who are conversant with the full facts of the situation, as they stand just now, will probably be found prepared to contest.

Indeed, it may be added that the labourers themselves, while almost everywhere complaining, generally and very strongly both of the want of employment and of the inadequacy for the support of their families of the current wages, have in numerous instances accompanied this with a frank acknowledgment of the entire inability of the farmers to do, in either respect, anything more than they are at present doing for their relief. A striking instance of this is to be found in the quotation contained in paragraph 35 in my recent report on Thomastown Union, county Kilkenny, from the evidence given before me at the town of Innage by one of the class, detailing the personal result of his own experience, on a limited scale, in this particular connexion, and, it may be observed, that others to substantially the same effect might be easily adduced.

I have, &c.,
(Signed) W. P. O'BRIEN,
(Assistant Commissioner).

B-1K
KILMALLOCK.

Want of constant employment.
Desire for a plot of land.

APPENDIX A.

CONTRACT PRICES for the under-mentioned Articles supplied to Kilnclack Union Workhouse in 1882 and 1883.

I.—Produce and Necessaries.

Name of Article.	Quantity.	1882.	1883.
		s. d. c.	s. d. c.
Flour	per ton	16 10 0	11 10 0
Oatmeal	"	12 6 0	12 0 0
Indian meal	"	7 18 0	6 0 0
Beef, oil rounds for beef tea .	per lb.	0 0 0	0 0 0
Mutton	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Stalks and heads of beef . . .	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Soft water	per cart	1 0 0	0 18 0
Irish soap	"	1 0 0	0 17 0
Galton's No. 1 stout	per doz.	0 3 4	—
Harport red, oil steamed coal .	per ton	1 0 0	1 0 0
Exeter coal	"	—	1 0 0
Composts and stable manure .	per lb.	0 0 0	0 0 0
Perforated oil	per gallon	—	0 0 0
Washing soda	per cart.	4 10 0	4 10 0
Starch	per lb.	0 0 0	0 0 0
Broken rice	per cart.	0 15 0	0 10 0
Arrowroot biscuits	per lb.	0 0 0	0 0 0
Lentils	per doz.	0 1 0	0 1 0
Ilco eggs	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Fresh butter	per lb.	0 1 0	0 1 0
Gill	per doz.	0 10 0	0 10 0
Whiskey	per gallon	0 10 0	0 10 0
Brandy	per doz.	0 10 0	0 10 0
Port wine	"	0 10 0	0 10 0
Food sugar	per lb.	0 0 0	0 0 0
Salt	per cart.	0 0 0	0 0 0

II.—Clothing and Bedding.

Name of Article.	Quantity.	1882.	1883.
		s. d. c.	s. d. c.
Strong grey calico, 1 yard wide .	per yard	0 0 0	0 0 0
Loose calico	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Shocking calico	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Twisted calico, 18 inches wide .	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Green black, 1 yard wide . . .	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Fried calico, 18 inches wide . .	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Check, 1 yard wide	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Blue flannel, 1 yard wide . . .	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Scrap flannel	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Irish flannel, 18 inches wide . .	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Coarse flannel, red, oil wool . .	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Flannels, 1 lb. weight	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Thread, white and black . . .	per lb.	0 0 0	0 0 0
Yarn	per doz.	0 1 0	0 1 0
Woolen yarn	per lb.	0 10 0	0 10 0
Shoes	per pair	0 0 0	0 0 0
Ties, 18 inches wide	per yard	0 0 0	0 0 0
Shawls, 18 inches wide	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Shawl, 18 inches wide	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Spools	per doz.	0 1 0	0 1 0
Sole leather	per lb.	0 0 0	0 0 0
Double leather	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Black top	"	0 0 0	0 0 0
Strong shoes or light brown leather .	"	0 0 0	0 0 0

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

I R E L A N D.

R E P O R T

BY

MR. W. P. O'BRIEN, C.B.
(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER),

ON THE

POOR-LAW UNION OF MOUNTMELICK
(QUEEN'S AND KING'S COUNTIES).

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18. Physical condition.
19. Statistics of pauperism.
20. Cost of maintenance and contract prices.
21. Conclusion of preliminary observations.

I.—SUPPLY OF LABOUR.

22. Supply sufficient. Emigration.
23. Immigration.
24. Comparative efficiency of labourers.
25. Comparison with other districts.

II.—CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

26. Period of engagement. Continuity of employment. Begging by labourers' wives.
27. Hours of labour.
28. Women and children's hours of labour.
29. Sunday work.

III.—WAGES AND EARNING.

30. Rate of wages.
31. Piecework.
32. Provisions. Mode of payment during harvest.
33. Malting industry. Turf industry. Stone-breaking.
34. Annual earnings. Women and children.
35. Provisions.
36. Typical cases of wages.

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36. Great variation in accommodation.
37. In rural districts.
38. Repairs not attended to.
39. In towns.
40. Position of Union. Labourers' Asile.
41. Contrast with other Unions.
42. Summary of proceedings.
43. Cost of building cottages.
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45. Defects. Accommodation. Improvements suggested. Offices. Wire fences. Trespass.

Paragraph.

V.—GARDENS AND ALLOTMENTS.

46. Cultivation.
47. Censures.
48. Allotments to town labourers.
49. Distinction between labourers.
50. Cow runs. Cow gates.
51. Live stock.

VI.—BENEFIT SOCIETIES.

52. None.

VII.—TRADE UNIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

53. Labour Federation only in southern extremity of Union.
54. Mountmellick Labour League.
55. Coolman branch.
56. Knights of the plough.

VIII.—GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED.

57. Generally good. Labourers' complaints against farmers. Farmers' complaints against labourers.

IX.—THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

58. Comparison with former years.
59. Emigration. Cost of living.
60. Tillage farming.
61. Gardens and cow-ards. Urban districts.
62. Perquisites and privileges.
63. House accommodation.
64. Illustrative quotations from evidence.
65. Industries.
66. Mountmellick. Woollen. Malting. Iron foundry. Tannery and bottling works.
67. Maryborough. Flour mill. Malting.
68. Portlannington. Malting. Flour mill.
69. Mountmellick. Milling. Malting. Former industries.
70. Turf industry.
71. Quarrying and stone-caking.
72. Conclusion as to industries.
73. Censures, absence of.

X.—CONCLUSIONS.

74. Final remarks.
75. Consistency of employment. Insufficiency of wages.
76. House accommodation.
77. Rural allotments for town labourers.
78. Town labourers.

APPENDIX A.

Statements by the secretary of the Mountmellick Branch of the Irish Democratic Labour Federation, showing the number of labourers in the different parts of the district.

APPENDIX B.

Correspondence between labourers of Mountmellick, Local Government Board, Dublin, and Mountmellick Board of Guardians, submitted by secretary of Labour Federation.

APPENDIX C.

Return of contract prices for workhouse supplies.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

To GEORGEY DRAG, Esq., Secretary,
Royal Commission on Labour.

Monkstown, Co. Dublin,

8th May 1886

Sir, I have the honour to report for the information of the Royal Commission on Labour that on the 16th ultimo I arrived in the Monkstown Union, and was engaged there from that time until the 2nd instant in the prosecution of my inquiry into the general condition and circumstances of the agricultural labourers in that quarter.

On the 16th ultimo, I had an opportunity of attending the meeting of the Board of Guardians, and of explaining the object of my visit there to the several members who were present, and who craved, let me say here, the utmost readiness to facilitate my proceedings by every means within their power—a promise afterwards very fully and kindly redeemed by them.

Immediately on my arrival I placed myself in communication with the county and district Inspectors of the Royal Irish Constabulary at Maryborough, from whom, as well as from the several sergeants and Constables acting under them, I subsequently experienced, as usual, the most cordial and practical assistance in the execution of my task.

I, at the same time, took steps to obtain the co-operation of such of the local land owners, agents, farmers, public officials, and others as seemed likely to interest themselves in the object of my mission in the Union, and I very willingly and thankfully acknowledge the valuable information supplied to me, in numerous instances, in response to the appeals so made by me, upon the subject of my inquiry.

I subsequently attended by appointment at the several principal centres of population in the different districts of the Union, for the purpose of recurring the evidence of the best representatives of both the farmers and labourers who were accessible to me, and who proved willing to accept my invitation to meet me with this object.

I attended in this way at the following places, viz. :—Monkstown and Rossville in the central division, Clonsilla in the north, Portlannington in the east, Maryborough in the south-east, Mountrish in the south, Colrain in the south-west, and Clonsilla and Clonsilla in the west; and at each point visited, in addition to receiving a large body of evidence, I took the opportunity of personally examining as many of the labourers' homes as it was possible to do, and of acquiring closely into the circumstances and general surroundings of the occupants, and of ascertaining from themselves the views entertained by them with regard to their position.

In accordance with my usual practice in this respect, I take leave to submit, as a preface to my detailed report on the several prescribed heads of inquiry, some preliminary observations, explanatory of the general character of the Union.

Of the ten Poor Law Unions which are either wholly or partly included in the Queen's County, Monkstown is the most considerable, being one of the only 10 Unions in Ireland embracing an area of over 500,000 acres.

It is an entirely inland district, and is situated in the northern division of the county, having as its boundaries Tallanure and Ballymore Unions to the north, Abbey-lin Union to the south, Portlannington and Rossville Unions to the west, and Athy Union to the east.

It is composed chiefly in the Queen's County, but includes also a part of the south-eastern extremity of the King's County.

The Union is divided for poor law purposes into 48 separate electoral divisions, of which 37, containing an area of 176,981 acres, or more than seven-eighths of the entire, are in the Queen's County, and five, with an area of 24,547 acres, or less than one eighth of the entire in the King's County.

The area of the entire Union is 201,528 acres, the poor law valuation is 103,774, or about 10s. 3d. per

acre, and 3s. 6d. per head of the population, which is now 41,451, as against 34,636, the census return for 1851, and 37,165 for 1871, this being equivalent to a reduction of 3,155, or 9.1 per cent, and 3,714 or 15.4 per cent. within the last 10 and 20 years respectively.

Within the Union are situated four towns of some importance, viz., Maryborough, situated on a small river, tributary to the Barrow—the county capital and same town—having a population of 2,839; Monkstown, the centre and capital of the Poor Law Union, to which it gives its name, 2,423; Portlannington, situated on the river Barrow—which until lately returned a member to Parliament—2,121; and Mountrish, 1,656, besides which are to be noted five villages, chiefly of small extent, viz., Clonsilla, population 125, Rossville, 138, Clonsilla, 124; Colrain, 114, and Ballinacra, 113.

Of these towns it is to be observed that though Maryborough now takes the first place, both in point of population, and of general commercial activity, this has only come about as one of the many similar changes experienced in different parts of the country in comparatively recent years.

Monkstown—situated on the River Ouse or Ousea—held at one time a conspicuous position as one of the chief and favourite settlements of the Society of Friends in Ireland—an element of which the local community still retains a considerable, though greatly reduced, representation.

It was, not improbably, in a great measure due to this circumstance, and to the well-known habits of industry and enterprise which may be said to have peculiarly distinguished the members of this excellent body wherever they established themselves, that the town was selected for the favourable notice it appears to have attracted in the pages of Lewis's Topographical History of Ireland, published in 1837—that it is a county as within the last 50 years.

After describing the general surroundings of the town at that time, and its then population, 4,377, or just very far short of double the present figure, the historian just referred to says with respect to it :—

"It consists of one principal with some smaller streets, and in 1831 contained 700 houses, many of which are very neat, and some elegant buildings. From the extent of its trade and manufactures it ranks as the chief town in the county."

The weaving of cotton is carried on very extensively, and affords employment to about 2,000 persons in the town and neighbourhood. The manufacture of woollen stuffs and coarse woollen cloths also is conducted on a very extensive scale by the Messrs. Bole, and the Messrs. Miller and Sons, who have lately erected very spacious buildings adjoining the town for spinning and weaving, in which nearly the same number of persons are employed.

In 1834 Messrs. J. and D. Roberts, from Anglin, established an iron and brass foundry here on an extensive scale, for the manufacture of steam and locomotive engines, and machinery in general, in which about 50 persons are employed.

There are also an extensive manufactory of hats and shawls, a tan yard, three breweries, a flour mill, two soap manufactories, a distillery making about 120,000 gallons of whiskey annually, and some long-established potteries for tiles and the coarser kinds of earthenware.

In a subsequent part of this Report, paragraph 36, will be found a detail of the several forms and extent of industrial employment afforded at the present time in the town, and from which it will be observed with regret how very great and unfavourable is the change in this respect that has taken place in the interval.

Throughout by far the greater part of this Union, including the land lying to the north, east and south, the general face of the country is level, towards the

R-X.
Mountrish.

Town.

Maryborough.

Mountrish.

Society of Friends.

Present industrial.

Present features of the country.

R.-X. MOUNTAIN. The soil is west, however, it assumes a more or less uneven and hilly aspect, and on that side it is bordered by the extensive mountain range of Slieve Donard, which rises in parts to a height of more than 1,300 feet.

12. The formation of about two-thirds of the entire Union, that is on the north, east, and south sides, is carboniferous limestone, but on the west is characterized by a considerable extent of old, red sandstone, slightly diversified by a few scattered beds of lower strata.

13. The soil of this union is nowhere of a very rich character and varies a good deal in value in different localities.

It is for the most part of a light clay or sandy nature, with a considerable admixture of black moory turf, and in some places it is of a poor, mossy, and in others of a marshy character.

In the central and western districts the general quality of the land may be described as fair, while to the west and again in the extreme north of the Union it is, in a great measure, of a poor and inferior description.

Onifting the cases into which the town element enters, the diversity encountered in the purely rural districts of the Union, in the rate of valuation to acre, will be most conveniently illustrated by the following figures extracted from the rate books, viz.:-

Municipal Divisions.	Acre.	Valuation.	Valuation per Acre.
No. 1.—Inferior Soil.			
Northtown	3,750	675	0 18
Brades	3,802	550	0 14
Capard	5,608	708	0 12
Castlemore	6,202	1,077	0 17
Lisles	3,677	1,200	0 32
No. 2.—Superior Soil.			
Shank	3,445	4,000	0 11
Kilbrannigan	3,441	2,800	0 08
Ballinacorney	3,075	3,500	0 11
Jamesstown	3,345	3,800	0 11
Kilbrannigan	4,000	3,200	0 08
Entire Union	20,618	10,771	0 51

14. The farms to be met in most parts of the Union do not, as a rule, belong to the large class, 30 to 50 acres appearing to be about the average, which in certain districts rises to 40; there being, however, several farms greatly exceeding these limits, and also many of a much smaller description.

The total number of rated buildings in the Union is 9,450, which gives an average area of 21 acres, with a valuation of 104 17s. 6d. for each building; but if the town ratings were excluded, the calculation for the purely rural districts would give, of course, a larger area and valuation per building.

The total number of ratepayers possessing the juror's qualification of 40s. valuation in the county, and 10s. in the towns is 393, and of these 111, or nearly one-fifth of the entire, possess the higher qualification of 160s., entitling them to serve as special jurors.

15. The system of farming generally pursued in the Union is of a mixed character. Dry farming forms, however, but an inconsiderable element in most cases in the arrangements, which may be said to be mainly directed to dry stock, sheep and tillage.

Though the extent of land under tillage is very much less at present than in former times, it is still considerable, as compared with what is to be met with in other districts.

The proportion of the farms usually sowed each year, now is variously estimated at from one-eighth to three-fourths, according to the greater or less suitability of the soil to that purpose, but about one-fourth would appear to be the closest approximation to a fair general average, so far as I can form a judgment on the point.

The crops usually grown are barley, oats, potatoes, mangolds, and turneps; there is little or no wheat

grown, for the cultivation of which the nature of the soil is not favourable.

16. The ownership of property is very much divided. The largest proprietor is Sir Charles Coote, who has a residence in the district; and next to him in extent are the Earl of Portliff, Mr. Stoddington Smyth, Mr. Warburton, Mrs. Adair, Mr. Kerins, Mr. Deane, Mr. Dunne, Lord de Vesci, Lord Clonmole, and Colonel Coote, all, or most of whom, have also local residences. There are several besides, not necessary to be noted here, who either live in other parts of the Queen's County, or elsewhere in Ireland, and who are likewise owners of property in the Union, of varying extent and importance.

17. Though many of the labourers are dispersed over the farms in the rural districts, and are thus placed in convenient proximity to their daily work, a still greater number are, probably, to be here found concentrated in the towns and villages. In these cases numerous and strong representations have been addressed to me as to the hardship redressed in this respect, and the long distances that have to be travelled in consequence in going to and from work when obtained in the country; at the same time, it must be observed that it is exceedingly doubtful if many of the labourers in the towns who make the complaint would be found willing to transfer themselves to the country, even if houses were there provided for their accommodation.

18. The general financial position of the Union with respect to its liabilities of a public nature may be pronounced to be especially favourable.

The Union is compelled for the purpose of county administration in seven different branches, and in these the aggregate poundage of the last two half yearly assessments, ranged between a minimum of 1s. 6d. and a maximum of 1s. 10d.

The poor rate assessment presents an equally favourable aspect.

The last rate only averaged 1s. 7d., and ranged between a minimum of 9d., in three cases, to a maximum of 2s. 2d., also in three cases, to which is only to be added a special rate made an certain contributory areas, chiefly of small amount, and a second instalment of the loan under the Seed Supply Act of 1891, amounting only to 20s.

19. The following are the comparative statistics of Union expenditure at the present time, and the same date in 1885, viz.:-

	1885.	1891.
Average daily number in workhouse	264	314
Number on outdoor relief	50	127
Total	713	1,065
General average weekly cost of maintenance	£s. 6d.	£s. 4d.

From these figures it will be observed that there has been within the decade a reduction of 57 in the number of workhouse inmates, and of 218 in the recipients of outdoor relief, thus being equivalent to a total reduction of 275, or more than 25 per cent. of the number relieved.

20. It will be further observed that the cost of maintenance in the workhouse has, within the same period, fallen from 2s. 6d. to 2s. 4d. per head weekly, a result which appears to be mainly attributable to the greatly more favourable terms on which it is now found practicable to obtain contracts for the total supplies, a detailed statement as to which for 1891 and 1885 respectively will be found in the Return marked C appended hereto.

21. Thus being to a conclusion with preliminary observations as it seemed desirable I should offer with respect to the general character of the Union, and I shall now proceed to submit my detailed report on the several specific heads of inquiry, in the usual order.

THE
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I.—SUPPLY OF LABOUR.

THE
AGRICUL-
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LABOURER.
—
England.

22. As a general proposition I think it may be stated that the supply of and demand for labour in this Union, at the present time, are, upon the whole, very fairly balanced, but during periods of exceptional pressure, as spring, haytime, and harvest, it is certain that a decided dearth is frequently experienced, and it is only by the use of machinery that farmers represent they are now able, at such periods, to get their work done at all, owing to the great decrease that has taken place from emigration in the number of the labourers during the past ten or fifteen years.

A magistrate of much intelligence and experience, residing in a well-circumstanced district in the eastern section of the Union, with the affairs of which he is intimately acquainted, says as to this—

Eastern.

"In this district, which is mainly in tillage, the supply of agricultural labourers has of recent years fallen very low, owing to a constant drain on the people by emigration, caused as a rule, by young boys and girls being taken out to America by friends and relatives already there, so that it is next to impossible to get an extra hand when necessary."

Emigra-
tion.

23. There can hardly be said to be such a thing as immigration, properly so called, experienced at any time or in any part of this Union, beyond the fact that labourers resident in the towns, are, in busy seasons, very commonly employed temporarily in the adjoining rural districts, to which they move for that purpose, and from which they return on the termination of their brief engagements.

Con-
siderable
flowing
of labourers.

24. As regards the comparative efficiency of the labourers now and formerly, there is little room, I fear, to doubt that a decided change for the worse is now almost everywhere experienced.

A member of the Board of Guardians, residing in the southern part of the Union, where he is also, I believe, a considerable employer of labour, says as to this—

Western.

"This is a sore subject with employers, the present day labourer, though better fed, housed, and clothed than his father or grandfather ever dreamed of, is but a poor substitute as regards work. No man in my employment can dig as of old and mowing with scythe, reaping, and thatching are amongst the lost arts. No woman can now weed, spin or knit, and refuse to do field work."

Compared
with other
districts.

25. This as regards comparison with the past; as regards other districts of the country, there is probably not much difference in this respect to be noted here.

II.—CONDITION OF EMERGENCY.

26. Except in the case of resident farm servants, who are invariably engaged by the quarter, half year, or year, the engagement and payment of labourers, even when continuously retained in the same employment, is by the week, labourers casually employed during harvest and other busy seasons being only hired and paid by the day.

Continuity
of employ-
ment.

Many labourers here, as I may say everywhere, represent very strongly that during the winter season they are for the most part left without any employment, save an odd job now and again.

This complaint usually comes either from labourers resident in the towns, or sometimes in the rural districts, from those who are partially beyond their work, and therefore are unlikely to be called upon unless in cases of emergency.

That, as a matter of fact labourers are to be met with who are idle for a considerable part of their time, cannot, I think, be disputed, but on the other hand, this is represented, and I am bound as far as my opinion justly represented, to be at least largely, though certainly by no means always, attributable to themselves. Many of them undoubtedly prefer seasonal jobs, such as the use of the tower effort, at high wages to regular employment at a lower rate in the country, such as all steady and capable labourers are bound to be, as a rule, able to command here. It has been in numerous instances established to my satisfaction that in preference to availing themselves of this latter alternative, many labourers are content at such seasons to remain idle themselves, and rely chiefly for their support on such assistance as their wives are able to obtain from the generosity of the neighbouring farmers.

In paragraph 26 of my report on Goshal Union will be found a striking bit of evidence as to this last point.

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given by a peculiarly well qualified witness examined by me there, and his testimony on the subject has been confirmed by much independent evidence to the same effect obtained by me in several other places.

S-X.
MORRIS
MORRIS

27. The hours of labour usually observed are in summer from 6 or 7 a.m. to 6 or 7 p.m.; where work is not commenced until 7 breakfast is usually taken before work begins, and then only one hour is allowed for dinner—in other cases two hours are allowed for meals. The hours of labour in summer time may be said to be from 10 to 11, and in winter about two hours less, but no account is taken of the time occupied in going to and returning from work during other seasons.

Hours of
labour.

28. Women and children, when employed, probably observe the same hours, generally speaking, as the men, but their employment appears to be very much restricted here to short periods of the year, as harvest time.

Women and
children.

A member of the Board of Guardians, who himself farms extensively, says as to this—

Evidence.

"I employ but few women, as the young girls either emigrate or go out to service, and the wives have to remain at home and do the household work." And another witness, on the same subject, says—

"Women refuse, and the children must attend school, therefore the growing of green crops, &c., requiring weeding and thinning cannot be attempted on any large scale."

29. Sunday work, so I think, unknown here, beyond what may be said to be, from its peculiar nature, absolutely inadmissible.

Sunday
work.

An experienced employer, already quoted under another head, says on this subject—

Evidence.

"I allow no work to be done on Sundays, nor do I require my men to work on national holidays. This is pretty general through this part of the country. Of course, the men who have been in charge of cattle and horses have to give them their feed on Sundays, but this is all."

III.—WAGES AND RATIONING.

30. The circumstances of different districts of this Union cause some diversity in the rate of wages paid to ordinary labourers, which may be said to be generally about as follows—

Where no diet is given, 8s. to 12s. a week are the limits, but 8s., 9s., and 10s. are the ordinary rates, 12s. being altogether confined to certain special cases.

Where diet is given, sometimes three and sometimes only two meals, the usual rates are 4s. to 6s., 5s. and 6s. being the most common.

Resident farm boys, living with and boarded by their employers, 7s. to 10s. a year.

In busy seasons, such as haytime and harvest the usual rates are 2s. to 2s. 6d. a day, with, most frequently, food in addition.

31. There is scarcely anything in the way of piece-work to be noted.

Piece-work.

32. To those constantly working with the same employment is the practice to give, in many cases, certain important advantages in addition to the wages, as a house and garden, or potato pound, either free or very cheap, also grass for a cow or two, or an allowance of milk or tallow, &c., &c., and in some cases, though not in all, it is usual to give such labourers in the harvest time either an addition of 2s. a week to their ordinary wages, or a bulk sum of 1s. or thereabouts at the close of the operations.

Proportion.

33. During about eight months of the year, from 1st October to 1st June, a good many of the agricultural labourers in this Union had very remunerative employment in connexion with the mending industry, which is here conducted on a somewhat extensive scale in certain places, and during the months of June and July, which are slack times as regards agricultural work, many are engaged at 2s. to 2s. 6d. a day, in the cutting and setting of turf—an industry which is here very extensively followed, but is chiefly in the hands of the small farmers who rent the bogs from the respective bog owners of the district, and do the necessary work for the most part themselves.

Mending
industry.Turf
industry.

Many of the labourers are, in certain districts, likewise able to obtain employment under the county surveyors, in breaking stones for the public roads during

Stone-
breaking on
county
roads.

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3-X.
Hoxford
unlike.
Annual
wages.

a part of the year, earning at this employment while it continues about 10s. a week.

Women and
children.

Perpetual.

Typical
cases.

34. The annual earnings of labourers in constant employment throughout the year may be stated as follows:—

- Ordinary labourers, with feed, 19s. 8s. to 15l. 15s.;
Ordinary labourers, without feed, 20l. 10s. to 26l.;
Skilled labourers, 31l. 4s.;
Resident labourers, 7s. to 10s.

The annual earnings of women and children and others obtaining only casual and intermittent employment are too variable and uncertain to be correctly estimated, neither is it possible to attach a specific money value to the allowances and privileges which, it has been seen, many of the labourers here enjoy in addition to their ordinary wages.

35. In illustration of what has been just stated under this head, I take leave to submit the particulars of a few fairly typical cases, extracted either from the evidence given before me, or from the communications forwarded to me by some of those to whom I applied for information.

No. 1 Case.

An especially intelligent and liberal employer of labour in the northern part of the Union—King's County—thus explains his labour arrangements at the present time:—“I am of farm, 389 acres, Irish measure, (644 statute acres), tillage 50 to 100 acres; number of men constantly employed, wet and dry, 7, as follows:—

- (1.) Herd, 8s. a week, with good cottage, two acres of land and grass of 2 cows, and an ox;
(2.) Assistant Herd, 5s. a week, some on Sundays, but ordinary and cottage with one road at 10s. a year;
(3.) Labourer, 4s. a cottage and one road at 5s. a year;
(4.) Labourer, 5s. a cottage and one road at 5s. a year;
(5.) Labourer, 2s. a cottage, 800 acres at 15s. per annum.

(6.) Labourer, 3s. a yearman, comes on Sundays, son to No. 7.

(7.) Labourer, 8s. a cottage, one acre at 35s. per annum.

Harvest men and women binding corn, &c., not less than 12 or more than 15, at 5s. a day all round, including own regular men for three or four days. All the tools are supplied by the employer. All wages paid on Friday evening.

No. 2 Case.

A member of the Board of Guardians, who was specially recommended to me as an experienced and reliable authority on the subject of my inquiry, states the particulars of his own case thus:—

“I hold 227 Irish acres (328 statute acres), 40 of which are tillage.

“The number of permanent labourers is 9. I pay my men 8s. a week each; they diet themselves.

“I think and keep in good repair a three-roomed house, which stands on half an acre (Irish) of land, for the head of each family, for which he allows me 1s. per week.

“If the man has means to spare, after sowing his garden, I give him land to put in on, to sow potatoes and cultivate it for him.

“Any of my labourers who are able to keep a cow I give him grass for her, for the whole year at 2l.

“Two men are used for the cutting of my turf. They will be able to cut 3s. 6d. per day each for two weeks.

“Women picking stones, &c., 5s. at 10d. per day for two weeks, and more in July thinning turnips for about the six weeks. Extra hands at hay-time and harvest at 2s. per day, at hay two men for two weeks, at harvest five men for three weeks.

“Potatoes are taken out by women and boys—about 4 for a week—at 10d. per day; thus, I think, is pretty near the number of hands and the amount paid here.”

No. 3 Case.

A working farmer living within a few miles of the town of Mountmellick deposes as follows:—

“I farm 174 Irish acres (258 statute acres); a good deal of it is largely mountain land, tillage, 10 or 12 acres; crops, oats, potatoes and turnips.

“I employ permanently three men, they are paid— one has a cottage and garden at 30s. a year, and he gets 4s. a week and three meals. Of the other two, one is a resident boy at 2l. and he gets work done for him of

the value of 4l. more; the last is an old man, he boards and gets 4s. a week.

“The present general rate of wages about 22s. is now 1s. a day with diet, and in winter 8d. a day.

No. 4 Case.

Another working farmer in the southern part of the Union says:—

“I farm 57 Irish acres (82 statute acres), tillage about one acre this year, barley, oats, potatoes and turnips. I employ three permanent labourers and extra hands at busy seasons.

“The present labourers get 1s. a day and two meals, with tea in the evening; 8s. a week is given where no diet is allowed. Extra hands get 2s. a day and diet in the harvest.”

No. 5 Case.

One further quotation under this head will suffice, and I give it from the evidence of the largest farmer, and as well as the most active and successful under in the locality. He says:—

“I farm 800 statute acres, under tillage 80 acres at present, but I have had 150, the general proportion of tillage here is about one-fourth. I am about the largest farmer in the Union, certainly the largest tillage farmer.”

“I have about 35 permanent labourers, with wages of, on an average, 8s. to 10s. a week, with free house and one road or more of land. I plough and they manure and till it. No man I give it manure of and all, and two or three get milk of a cow.

“I have also six extra men for part of each year, say for five months, and they get the same wages as the others.

“The general rate paid here at harvest and other busy times is 2s. 6d. a day, sometimes 3s. with diet.”

The five cases just cited may, I think, be regarded as fair average samples of the general nature of the arrangements in operation on the different classes of what may be termed large farms to be met with in this Union.

Farmers of the smaller class, who constitute here a tolerably numerous body, not only possess all their own work, but are also, at hurried times, in the habit of lending to each other considerable assistance, so that from this class the agricultural labourers cannot be said to, at any season, obtain employment at all.

IV.—OTHER ACCOMMODATION.

36. The condition of things prevailing in this Union, as regards the housing of the labouring classes, varies a good deal.

In many instances the accommodation provided is fairly satisfactory, both as regards the size of the houses and their state of repair, &c., in several others it is the reverse in both respects, while in a very large proportion of the cases, though sufficient in extent, the state of the buildings as to repair, &c. is extremely bad.

37. In certain rural districts, notably in the eastern section of the Union, on the properties, for example, of the Earl of Portfingdon and Mrs. Adair, many excellent labourers' houses, with plots of half an acre and upwards attached, have been provided by the estate owners.

Farmers, too, have in numerous instances made fairly satisfactory provision in this respect for their own labourers, on their lands, but as regards the houses belonging to the latter class it is to be feared that they have too commonly been permitted, in recent times, to fall in large measure out of repair.

The landlords in such cases now, as a rule, recognize no responsibility as attaching to them in regard to the maintenance of these buildings, and the farmers rarely or never spend anything whatever upon them, while the labourers themselves are, of course, neither able nor willing to do anything in the matter.

38. Even thatching is not attended to, so the mud walls, of which there are very many to be met with, give way, and the houses become, of course, very bad.

“The last is an evil to which, as originating in the same cause, I have already had occasion to direct special attention in other places.”

Many labourers' houses are to be met with throughout the country which are wretched and partly collapsed “so as to be fit for human habitation,” but which, in

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reality, require nothing beyond timely attention to ordinary repairs to render them quite unobjectionable, and so obviate the necessity, in numerous cases, of erecting the costly alternative of providing new buildings out of the public funds.

30 In the town districts a considerable diversity of condition in this respect is likewise ascertained.

In many cases there is little or no room for reasonable complaint, but in the lanes and back streets of Mountsack (the worst of all), Maryborough and Portlinton, and, though in a lesser degree, in certain limited parts of the town of Mountsack, as well as in some of the outlying villages visited by me, numerous cases come under my own personal observation in which the accommodations must be pronounced to be extremely wretched in character, and, in many particulars quite inadequate to meet the reasonable and decent requirements of an ordinary family.

31 From the particulars detailed in paragraphs 7 and 18 respectively of this Report, it will be seen that both as regards the territorial extent and the financial condition, Mountsack is entitled to hold a rather prominently important place amongst the Irish Poor Law Unions. Under these circumstances I was hardly prepared for the numerous and strong complaints addressed to me both as to the very limited extent to which the benefits conferred by the several Drainage Acts had been, so far, allowed to reach the agricultural labourers belonging to it, and as to the dilatory and disappointing manner in which, it was alleged, the little that had been conceded in this way had been carried into effect.

32 It must, no doubt, be admitted that in this matter Mountsack contrasts very unfavourably with many of the other Unions already visited by me in the course of this inquiry.

Kilmeelick, the last Union it was my duty to report on, may be specially referred to in this connection, and next to it the Unions of Kanturk, Ceshel and Westford, followed, though on a more limited scale, by those of Nune and Lisnort, while even in Thomastown, with a good deal less than half the population of Mountsack Union, the provisions made in this way is already very nearly double that of the latter, and at the date of my visit there, in February last, active steps were then in progress to extend it considerably farther.

33 The following is a brief summary of what has been hitherto done in this Union to give practical effect to the provisions of the enactments referred to.

Pure Provisional Orders in all have been obtained authorizing the erection of labourers' cottages, viz.:-

1st dated 3rd February, 1867, for 21 cottages,	
2nd " 31st May, 1868, for 17 "	
3rd " 18th March, 1869, for 22 "	
4th " 29th June, 1861, for 3 "	

Total 64 "

Of these there have been:-

Erected and occupied by labourers	32 cottages.
Now in progress of erection	17 "
Contracted for, but not yet commenced	3 "
Not yet contracted for	5 "
Abandoned for various causes	7 "
Total	64 "

From these data and figures it will be seen that, inconsiderable as has been the number of cottages it was originally proposed to provide, no returns can be made that have been taken into account for two of these included in the 3rd Order of 18th March 1869, that is more than three years ago, and for two of the last three sanctioned by the 4th Order of the 29th June, 1861, that is, nearly two years since.

In the Appendix to this Report, marked B, will be found a correspondence on this subject which took place just a year since between the labourers of the Mountsack district, the Local Government Board, Dublin, and the Mountsack Board of Guardians, which was handed in to me, at the close of his own examination, by John Doyle, a very intelligent man, the secretary of the Local Labour Federation at Mountsack, in support of their contention that the representations of the labourers seeking cottages in that Union were disregarded by the Guardians.

He accompanied this with a verbal statement, that nothing whatever had been done since by the Board

OF GUARDIANS IN FULFILLMENT OF THE OBLIGATION CONTAINED IN THE ENACTMENTS AND ORDERS OF THEIR MEETINGS OF THE 30th APRIL 1862, a statement which would certainly appear to be in strict accordance with the fact, whether the explanation of the neglect complained of may be

43. The cost of the 28 cottages completed is estimated to be about 1200. per cottage, but it may not improbably be found to reach a somewhat higher figure when all the items have been fully ascertained.

44. They are let to the labourers at the certainly reasonable rent of 1s. a week, which appears, so far, to be fairly paid upon the whole.

45. I took occasion, when driving through the Union, to visit several of these cottages, and, as they appear to me to have some rather serious structural defects, which it would seem advisable to guard against a repetition of, I take leave to note them here.

The accommodation is much too limited for anything like even a moderately sized labourer's family, such as is quite commonly to be met with.

A cottage of 5' living room, 9 feet by 7 feet 6 in., and two small bedrooms opening off it, each 9 feet by 7 feet 6 in.; there is no loft over any part.

A slight addition to the present height of the building, with a window in each gable, would admit of a loft which would provide two good sized bedrooms, as in the plan adopted at Westford, and without, I think, adding appreciably to the expense.

Attached to each is a small closet (sanitary), but no pigsty or fowlhouse, and as the latter is generally indispensable, the labourers have, I find, themselves provided it by the erection against the walls of the houses of an unsightly and disagreeing makeshift of a temporary loam.

A further mistake appears to have been made in the enclosing of the plots with a wire, instead of a substantial earthen fence, as elsewhere adopted.

The present description of fences will not prove, I apprehend, very durable, or economical as the long run, and, in the meantime, as it will easily admit of the trespass of young pigs, &c., &c., on the neighbouring farms, it is pretty sure to prove a frequent source of angry differences between the labourers and farmers.

V.—GARDEN ARRANGEMENTS.

46. The cottages built by the Board of Guardians have each, of course, the usual sanitary half acre of land attached to them, and this appears to be duly availed of, so designed, in the growing of potatoes and cabbages, &c., for the use of the family, as to which a highly intelligent and experienced county gentleman writes to me:-

"It is greatly to be regretted that the labourers have no idea of the cultivation or use of other vegetables, so as to make soup and pie of vegetables and potatoes, which would thus greatly improve their diet."

47. In addition to the plots just referred to, the labourers in the rural districts here very commonly hold small gardens with their houses from the farmers, either as part payment of their wages, or at rents of varying amounts, mostly moderate, and it is also represented that in country districts a root or so of Con-acre potato ground is commonly, though not always, to be obtained where the labourer is in a position to till and manure it, and is willing to pay for it in addition about 11s. a root.

Beyond what has been just stated the labourers here hold no land, as effect having been as yet given to the provision made as to this in section 16 of 48 & 49 Vict. cap. 77 (Act of 1885), and section 12 of 49 & 50 Vict. cap. 59 (Act of 1886).

48. As it seems doubtful whether the extension of the powers of Boards of Guardians contained in these enactments is fully known, or understood, it may be permitted to give here a quotation from the Act of 1885, which is as follows:-

48 & 49 Vict. cap. 77, section 16 provides that "A sanitary authority having any existing cottage, or purchasing any existing cottage, may purchase any land for the purpose of letting it to the tenant of such cottage, being an agricultural labourer, or may, without having or purchasing any cottage, purchase, or take on lease for a term of years by agreement, or tracts of land to be parcelled out in allotments to be let to agricultural labourers living in any neighbouring village, or town, if such land is so situated as to

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"be suitable for that purpose. Provided that the land "to be let to any one such person shall not exceed "half an acre," &c.

Section 12 of 40 & 50 Vict. cap. 59 (Act of 1886) extends to the foregoing provision the power of compulsory purchase; and under section 8 of 55 Vict. cap. 7 (Act of 1892), the quantity of land that may be so let has been extended from a half to "a whole acre."

This subject of rural allotments for the accommodation of labourers resident in towns has been already referred to by me in paragraph 46 of my Report on Cashel Union, where the subject was very strongly pressed on my notice by Mr. Laffan, the consulting sanitary officer of that Union.

As I have there stated, some very competent and by no means unfriendly witnesses appear to entertain a strong opinion that town labourers would not, generally speaking, take the additional trouble necessary to collect manure for and cultivate such plots if provided for them.

46. That many of them would not do so admits, I fear, of very little doubt, but the local authority should be especially of readily discriminating between labourers of this class and the many others of an entirely different stamp, and of regulating their procedure in dealing with the cases accordingly.

Where it was turned to proper account, the possession of such an allotment would manifestly prove of incalculable benefit to the labourers and their families during what are now frequently experienced to be periods of poverty and privation.

50. There are no cow runs, cow gates, or cow pastures to be met with in this Union, in the sense in which these terms are understood in England.

Herds and other labourers who are constantly retained by the same employer do, however, sometimes get grass for a cow or two, either as a privilege appertaining to their position, or at a specially moderate rate of charge, but such cases are not, I apprehend, very numerous in this Union.

51. There are no hen kept by any of the labourers, where live stock may be said to consist of pigs and fowls, with sometimes a goat or two, or perhaps an ass. Goats are much prized, especially where there are young children, but they are not met with here at all as commonly as in some other places.

VI.—BROTHER SOCIETIES.

52. No benefit society of any sort appears to exist here.

VII.—TRADE UNIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

53. Throughout by far the greater part of the Union there is no organisation existing under this head to be noted, so far as I could ascertain, but at each of the two points in the southern extremity of the district, namely, the town of Mallow, and the small village of Coghlin, I found that branches had been in existence in those districts for the last three years or so of the "Irish Democratic Labour Federation."

The secretary of each of these branches respectively attended and gave evidence before me.

54. At Mallow it was stated by him that he represented a body of about 108 members, and his complaints had chiefly reference to the want of constant employment, and of better wages, to the state of their house accommodation, which he described as "dreadful to "horridity," and to the unsanitary condition of the lanes, owing to the want of a proper system of drainage, which he considered should be undertaken as a means of providing for the labourers there employment, of which he states they are badly in want—as many as 144 of their number being, according to his estimate, unable to find work "for more than four months out of "the 12."

In his own individual case he had, however, not much to complain of, being, he stated, for eight months of the year employed as quarrying at 12s. a week, and during the remaining four at stone breaking on the public road at 10s. a week.

In the Appendix will be found two papers, handed in by this witness at the conclusion of his evidence, and marked A. and B. respectively.

The former, A., contains a detail and summary in support of his general statement of the number of labourers in the district, with the extent and nature of their employment. So, and the latter, B., in which I have already had occasion to make special reference in

paragraph 56, relates to the subject of their house accommodation, and the refusal of the Board of Guardians to entertain their representations.

55. At Coghlin, an entirely rural district, the secretary stated that the organisation there embraced about 80 members, and his principal grounds of complaint were that there were four or five labourers there who could not get constant work in winter, and 11 who were in need of better houses.

He had, however, no personal grounds for complaint. Though an unmarried man, having only his mother dependent on him, he had, it appeared, been fortunate enough to secure one of the very few cottages provided in the district by the Board of Guardians, and though only taking farm work, he said, "in spring and late "vest," he employed himself at other times "in mending boots."

Both secretaries, I may observe, gave their evidence with considerable intelligence.

56. I had a written communication from the president of another labour organisation, the "Knights of the Plough," in a neighbouring county, expressing their desire to give evidence on the subject of my inquiry, but, as it appeared from what was stated, that their body had no connection with the particular district I had been commissioned to deal with, it was not in my power to avail myself of the proffered assistance.

VIII.—GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED.

57. The general relations between employers and labourers in this district is represented to be, on the whole, friendly and good, and there is certainly no evidence anywhere to be met with of anything like open hostility between them.

At the same time, I am bound to say, that in their evidence before me many labourers expressed themselves with much bitterness as to the neglect of the farmers to provide them with more work, and give them larger wages, but this feeling, it is right to add, is not by any means general, and many of the most intelligent and reasonable of the class who came before me, here as elsewhere, freely acknowledged the absolute impossibility of the farmers doing more for them in either respect under the present unfavourable conditions.

On the other hand, many of the employers have quite as strongly complained to me of the great loss and hardship at present entailed on farmers, owing to the combined laziness and inefficiency of the labourer, with respect to which one employer says—

"Taking the increased daily hire and the diminished "daily work, farm labour has more than doubled "price within my recollection."

IX.—THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

58. That the general condition of the agricultural labourer in this Union has undergone, in most respects, a material change for the better within the last 10 or 15 years, admits, I consider, of no doubt whatever.

59. The sensible reduction in their number caused by emigration has led both to an increase in the ordinary rate of wages current in the district, and to far greater steadiness and constancy in the demand for their labour, while the considerable decline that has concurrently with this been experienced in the cost at which the labourers are able to supply themselves with the various articles of food, clothing, and other necessaries of their daily existence, constitutes a further, and a by no means insignificant, element for consideration in measuring the full extent of the improvement that has taken place in recent times, in their general circumstances and surroundings.

60. Though village farming has undoubtedly here, as elsewhere, diminished in extent, as compared with, say, 20 years ago, it is nevertheless still pursued, upon the whole, and in most of the districts of the Union, where the soil is suitable for the purpose, on a rather considerable scale, the average proportion of the farms at present devoted to this object being, as already stated, estimated at about one-fourth of the acreage—an estimate which, according to my opportunity for personal observation, is not far wide of the mark.

61. In addition to this the labourers here appear to enjoy in a somewhat exceptional degree, in the rural districts, the advantage of either having gardens attached to their cottages, or being able to procure

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Knights of
the Plough.

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complaints
against
farmers.

Farmers'
complaints
against
labourers.

Emigration.

Cost of
living.

Village
farming.

Gardens
and
cottages.

without much difficulty, as a rule, in their vicinity plots of one-acre potato ground, at the not very excessive rent of about 12. per rod, while in the principal urban districts of the union a good deal of remunerative employment is secured in connexion with the mashing and other industries during a period of the year, October to June, when it does not interfere with their harvest arrangements as regard to agricultural labour.

62. In many cases, too, perquisites and privilege of a more or less valuable kind, appear to be more granted to permanent labourers to a greater extent than is usually experienced in other districts of the country.

63. In one respect, however, and that, too, a rather vital one, it has appeared from the facts it has been my duty to detail in paragraph 55, that the march of improvement in this union has not at all kept pace with what has been attained in most of the other districts into the circumstances of which it has devolved on me to make inquiry, namely, in regard to the general house accommodation of the labourers.

While the precise extent to which reform in this respect may be called for can, of course, be only determined satisfactorily by those possessing an intimate practical acquaintance with the wants and circumstances of each particular locality, it becomes necessary that I should record here, as regards the main and central fact of the situation, that in numerous instances, and from most opposite, as well as most reliable quarters, it has been strongly urged upon me that in this important matter of the housing of the labourers the action hitherto taken by the responsible local authority in Mountmellick Union has fallen considerably behind what the exigencies of the case demanded at their hands.

64. A few illustrative quotations from the information furnished to me in connexion with this question of the general condition and housing of the agricultural labourer may be of some interest, and are here accordingly submitted—

No. 1. The very intelligent and valuable co-spectator whose personal arrangements have been already detailed in paragraph 35 (typical case No. 1), says under this head—

"The general condition of the agricultural labourer is moderately fair, but speaking from my own experience and observation of my neighbours, I do not see much opportunity of improvement, unless in a general improvement of farming, as present prices are hardly sufficient to cover cost of production."

"Their wages seem low, but they are really more comfortable than the men I have had in Dublin County at nearly double the wages."

"They keep pigs and fowls, any of them any good a cow; and have fuel (peat) for very little the children saving it in summer time, and almost as much brushwood as they care to take away; they are kept on, wet and dry, and those not constantly employed often get piece-work at draining."

In regard to their house accommodation, he describes the supply to be "indifferent as a rule," the state of repair to be, "bad as a rule," and the materials as "mud walls, thatched roofs."

No. 2. A medical officer, long established, and of considerable experience in an important district of the Union, says as to this—

"The general condition of the agricultural labourers, in my opinion, is much better than when I came here 25 years ago, and I think they are well provided for, except in some few cases that nothing could do good for."

"The work of improvement of the labourers dwellings is going on at a very slow rate indeed."

"I am of opinion some 10 or 12 cottages are required in this electoral division alone. I think it is the worst division in any part of the Union."

No. 3. An experienced constabulary sergeant reporting on his district, which has for its centre an important town, says—

"The general condition of the agricultural labourers is fair, but a good number of them would need better provision to be made for them."

"Cottages such as those erected under the Act, with land attached, would be a great advantage for those occupying inferior houses with little or no land."

"The labourer's wages are sometimes increased by the earnings of his wife, or other members of his family."

"They are often idle in bad weather, and it must then be difficult for them to find the means of living."

No. 4. Another equally experienced and intelligent constabulary sergeant, whose district also includes an important town, says on the same subject—

"The general condition of the agricultural labourers is fair. The great drawback is that in most cases they hold no land, except what their employers, the farmers, may give them. They are, therefore, unable to supplement their small earnings by the rearing of pigs and fowls."

"As a rule the family of the labourer ranges up to seven or eight, and without some other means of support, his weekly wages are not sufficient for his wants."

No. 5. A medical officer of standing and experience in an important district in the north of the Union, writes—

"As regards the wages paid to the ordinary labourers, I believe them to be good, 2s. and 2s. 6d. per day is some cases, but in the majority of cases the employment is not permanent"; and as regards to their house accommodation, he adds—

"The cottage accommodation for the labourers in Mountmellick Union is, in my opinion, in very many cases, bad, both as regards room and situation."

No. 6. A well-to-do proprietor and deputy lieutenant of the county, who takes an earnest and kindly interest in the well-being of the working classes around him, says, as to their general condition—

"As a rule they are well off, comfortable, indeed better off than the small farmers."

He adds, in connexion with the question as to their housing—

"Amongst the farmers there are several who have houses for their tenants, these as a rule are not well kept," while as to those holding cottages under the Board of Guardians, he makes the following interesting reference. He says as to this—

"The Guardians of Mountmellick Union have built several labourers' houses in the district. It is one of the great faults at the plan of these cottages that they cost a great deal too much money for the accommodation in them. At the same time it is a most remarkable fact that the whole condition of the occupants seems to change when they move from the old miserable hovels into these comparatively comfortable houses."

"They dress much better, keep their houses far more neatly, and I have many come to me to ask for flower roots to plant in their gardens, and in flower boxes in their windows."

Extracts from other evidence as to substantially the same effect might be readily added here, but those just given may probably be accepted as fairly and fully enough representing the general state of the facts as they at present exist.

65. In paragraph 10 of this report details have been given showing the extensive industrial developments which existed at Mountmellick less than 60 years ago, when Mr. Lewis, of London, published (1837) his well known and valuable Topographical Dictionary of Ireland.

Since that date a considerable change for the worse has, it is to be regretted, taken place in this respect, as will presently appear, while the population of the town has within the same interval fallen from 4,577 to 3,623, the latter equal to a reduction of 1,954 or nearly 43 per cent. within that time.

The present industries to be noted throughout the Union generally, are as follows:—

66. MOUNTMELICK.—The Messrs. Milner have a factory of long standing for the manufacture of tweeds and frieze, "Mountmellick frieze" having always held a conspicuous place in public favour and repute.

The factory is worked both by steam and water power, and has in all 10 looms, of which, however, only nine are working at the present time.

The number of hands now permanently employed is 30, viz., 17 men and 13 females, and the general weekly earnings in connexion with the establishment by piece-work appear to be, males, 6s. to 15s., females, 2s. to 12s.

There is next to be noted an extensive malting industry, carried on in connexion with the famous Dublin Brewery of Guinness and Company, the annual output amounting to about from 40,000 to 50,000 barrels of malt.

R. J. MOUNTMELICK

Industrial Mountmellick

Mountmellick weavers

Number of looms

Number of hands

Wages earned

Malting industry

Mr. K. MORROW-MELLICE.
There are only two men employed throughout the entire year at weekly wages of 11s. each, but during the mowing season, viz., from 1st October to 1st June, the number of hands employed varies at different periods from 50 to even as many as 120, the average being, however, only about 70, and the weekly wages ranging from 11s. to 12s., with a few boys at 10s.

The hours of labour are 5 am. to 6 p.m., with 2 hours for meals.

Iron foundry.
The iron foundry which sent claims notice here appears to be now worked on a very reduced scale, as compared with what is chronicled by Lewis.

The number of hands employed at the present time amounts only of three ordinary labourers, with weekly wages of 12s., and 10 smiths and welders at 35s., with one additional man for half work at 15s.

Wagon work.
The work done at the present time appears to consist chiefly of the general repair of machinery of all sorts, the new work done being now confined, as I understand, to mill machinery and fittings, &c.

Wagon and building work.
There remains but a temporary and hothouse store to be added to the list.

It employs 15 labourers at weekly wages of 8s. to 9s., two carriers, paid by piecework, each earn about 2s. a week, and the foreman receives 12s.

Wagon-borough.
Mr. Macdonald.—Mr. Wilson has here an extensive farm with two branches in the immediate neighbourhood.

Four mills.
These mills employ between them 62 hands in all, at weekly wages of from 10s. to 12s., 10 of them receiving free houses in addition.

The weekly output is about 600 sacks.

Milling industry.
There is also an extensive milling industry carried on for eight months, September to April; the annual output is about 25,000 barrels of meal, and the number of hands employed is 50, of whom 25 get 12s. a week, with a gratuity of 2s. a week at end of season, and 25 ordinary labourers receiving 10s. a week, with small gratuities at Christmas.

These appear to exhaust the very moderate list of local industries at present to be met with here; but it is to be observed that in former times the woollen manufacture was extensively carried on in the neighbouring districts.

Twelve spinning and weaving industries.
65. **PERCUMBER.**—The list here becomes a still more meagre one. There is a limited spinning industry carried on for seven or eight months of the year; the annual output is about 11,000 barrels of meal, and the number of hands employed is 15, with wages ranging from 11s. to 12s. weekly.

Four mills.
There is only to be noted in addition to this, one flour mill employing 20 men, at weekly wages of from 9s. to 12s., the average being about 10s.

There was formerly a small manufactory for tobacco, and another for soap and candles, but only directed to the limited purpose of purely local supply.

Manufacture.
66. **MILNORTH.**—There is now scarcely any industry deserving of the name to be specially noted here.

Milling industry.
The milling industry is nearly extinct in the district, and at the present time only employs two hands.

Wool-mill.
There are eight or nine hands occasionally employed by a Dublin miller, but the work done here in this way appears to be confined to the preliminary stages of the process of manufacture, and possesses little or no significance as a branch of local industry.

Wool-mill.
Iron was at one time extensively made here, and the cotton manufactory was, on the decline, substituted in it.

There was formerly an extensive factory for spinning and weaving cotton, which employed about 450 persons, namely, 150 in the mills and about 300 more in weaving calicoes at their own homes. Staff weaving was also carried on largely, and there was in addition a large brewery and malting establishment, and also a large oil mill, but all these are now mere things of the past—in fact, "ancient history."

Wool-mill.
70. There are extensive tracts of bog in this Union, the cutting and serving of the turf in connexion with which constitutes a more or less important branch of local industry, in certain districts, and as the work is for the most part performed between the closing of spring and the opening of haytime and harvest work, it does not clash with the ordinary agricultural arrangements.

There is not here, as described in paragraph 51 of my Report on New Union, a special class of what are

termed "bog labourers," devoting themselves exclusively to that pursuit.

The banks are in this Union usually reared, each year, from the autumn at rents of from about 7s. to 10s. and 15s. the perch, according to quality, by the neighbouring small farmers, who, with the help of their families, do the work themselves of cutting and propping the turf, and then in winter-time dispose of it in the surrounding towns and country.

In many instances, however, the banks are reared by the large class of farmers for their own accommodation, and in such cases the cutting and serving process is done by ordinary labourers, usually paid at the rate of 2s. and 2s. 6d. a day, and in this way several of this class find employment at a time when other work is slack.

Employers, who are also the owners of turbary, give it very commonly to their own labourers, either free, as a privilege, or at a low or merely nominal charge, and in this way many labourers are able to secure an abundant supply of fuel at little or no expense.

71. In certain localities many labourers find employment also, either constant or during part of the year, at quarrying, in which the wages earned amount to about 12s. a week. Some are also employed under the county surveyor in breaking stones for the public roads, at which 12s. a week are earned. It is difficult to ascertain the precise number engaged in these particular works, but there is no doubt that they in some districts contribute materially to swell the ordinary resources of a section of the labouring population.

72. Beyond what has just been enumerated there are no industries, not immediately connected with the cultivation and management of the land, to be noted in any part of the Union, as far as I was able to ascertain.

73. **Crescentree,** which formed so prominent a topic in my last report—that an Kilmallock Union—have, of course, no existence here, where dairy farming, at least upon anything like an extensive scale, is altogether unknown.

X.—CONCLUSIONS.

74. I have now brought to a close the tenth Report it has been my duty to submit to the Royal Commission on Labour with respect to the general condition of the agricultural labourers in the several districts of the country assigned to me for enquiry, and as I have in this case had occasion to enter rather more minutely than usual into some of the topics I have had to deal with, not very much, I think, remains that can be helpfully added in the shape of a general summary.

75. Complaints have in numerous instances here, as in other places, been urged by the labourers both as to their want of constant employment and the insufficiency of their wages, and the weight of evidence obtained by me tends to show that as regards the first of these points the grounds for complaint are a good deal less here than in generally experienced, and that even where they do exist the remedy lies, in great measure, at least, with the labourers themselves. As regards the second, most of the labourers that I have examined are, I think, fully sensible of the fact that the farmers are not just now in a position to deal at all more liberally with them; indeed, in this respect it may well be doubted whether, at the present moment, many of the labourers in this Union are not, as an intelligent and well-informed correspondent, already quoted in paragraph 55, has expressed it, really "better off than the small farmers."

76. The real and substantial grievances, however, urged by the labourers here centre in the question of their house accommodation, and I have already dwelt so fully on this aspect of their case that nothing further remains to be added upon it in this place.

77. The subject of rural pauperism for town labourers has as yet scarcely anywhere attracted the attention from local authorities that it seems to deserve, but I collect from the views conveyed to me by some very competent judges that there are at length symptoms to be observed of a growing tendency in the public mind to recognize how important a factor it really is in the practical solution of the problem of how the labourers' position can best be rendered reasonably comfortable and satisfactory.

78. It is amongst the towns labourers undoubtedly that the difficulties presented by the subject are felt with the greatest force.

79. Foremost of this class it is to be feared that not much in the way of amelioration can be hoped for, but a large

THE
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ANSWERS

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LABOURERS

TOWN
LABOURERS

and important section of the body occupy a different position, and for each of these as, from various causes, would probably be found either unable or unwilling to remove, under any circumstances, into the country—though doing agricultural work—it is, I think, unquestionable that the possession of plots of ground, within a reasonable distance of their present homes, would, with proper limitation, prove an almost incalculable advantage.

The measure is, it is to be observed, one involving really low expense and delay than the erection of new

cottage entails, and it may, under the circumstances, be permitted to share the hope, entertained now, I am aware, by many thoughtful observers of the situation, that the question will engage the early and serious consideration of those in whose hands have been placed the duty and responsibility of practically administering it.

I have, &c.

(Signed) W. P. O'BRIEN,
Assistant Commissioner.

E.-X.
MURPHY.

APPENDIX A.

WORKMEN NAMED IN AT CROSS OF HIS EXAMINATION ON THE 17TH APRIL, 1903, BY JOHN DONNELL, SECRETARY OF THE MOUNTAIN BRANCH OF THE IRISH DEMOCRATIC LABOUR FEDERATION, SHOWING THE NAMES OF LABOURERS IN THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE DISTRICT AND THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THEIR EMPLOYMENTS, &c.

Number of men employed under Sir Charles Henry Gault, Bart., Ballyfine Demesne, Mountrah, consisting of the Townlands Ballyfine, Despark, Drim and Rodcastle, 20. All of whom hold from 10 acres to 2 acres of land as partly tenants, with the exception of two men, one of whom is a "cottager" and has one acre of land attached to his house. The average rate of wages paid to these men employed are from 7s. to 10s. per week, and are subjected to no broken time. Number of hours each man is required to labour daily is, ten, commencing to work at 7 a.m., returning to dinner at 12, returning to work at 1 o'clock and retiring at 6 p.m. The majority of these men have hatted cattle, horse, and in some cases donkeys, swine and poultry. Factory Street, Mountrah Upper, contains 33 working men, 12 of whom are quarrymen and stone-breakers, and may be looked upon as the "sweating system," as they have to walk daily to and from their work six miles, which amounts in the year to upwards of 1,800 miles, for which they are paid nothing, as their work is given by task, and has to earn their daily hire after traversing this distance. Their employer is Mr. Benjamin Cullen, owner, under the supervision of Mr. H. V. White, county surveyor. These men are also employed on the roads from about the 15th November to the 15th February, when they receive at the rate of 10s. per week, and has to travel daily from six to 10 miles, and are subject to broken times if the day comes wet, or through a continuance of frost or snow. And if after walking five miles in the morning to their work, and if the day comes wet, they would have to return and be allowed nothing; only eight men who have constant employment from Mr. E. Bowe at 12s. per week. The remaining 21 have no constant employment; they have no surplus of any kind, but solely dependent on what they earn to-day to support themselves and their families to-morrow. They see in a state of wretchedness and poverty, in many cases a state of destitution sleeping with pigs. Their houses—no houses—are disgraceful to humanity, deprived of light, ventilation, accommodation and amenities for either sex. For these hovels they have to pay a rent of 1s., 1s. 3d. and 1s. 6d. weekly. In many cases householders subsidize their houses with a view of extracting constant rents from them. There is another and graver anomaly calling for this matter. If these unfortunate tenants fail to pay to the landlords this exorbitant rent demanded by their parsimony, they are summarily before a petty court of jurisdiction, and have no alternative permitted or allowed them only to quit after the expiration of seven, 10, or 14 days, whichever number happens to come first to the mouths of the magistrates who may happen to preside and adjudge in the case.

Church Street and Lawlor's Lane contain 25 labouring men, of which the same state of affairs may be applied. Shannon Street and Lower Mountrah contain 31 working men, 11 of which may be looked on as constant men in the employment of Messrs. Telford, Miller, Ernest Bowe and J. D. Mulhall, two men at second rated, and allowed the rate of wages paid by other employes, two men at first named receive 12s. per week, but have to work over hours, five at third named and receive from 7s. to 9s. per week; three men are

hedge labourers employed in a mill and work ten hours daily, except in the case of eight men, when they are allowed extra pay. Two of these men have a surplus, having permits from the owner of 1s. a day. These men at fourth named and receive 12s. per week, and has to work over hours; they are bound to work also on Sundays.

Forest, Spawhill, and Kibberlain contain 34 workmen, 10 of which are employed by Mr. John Hewkorth, J.P., four of whom are cottagers, and receive from 4s. to 7s. and 8s. a week; in addition to their wages they are allowed one rood of land for potato crop, filled, manured, ginkled, manured, dug out, a turf bank cut and drawn horns, with the grain of a cow and the milk of a cow free. The other six have from two to eight acres of land and turf banks and cow, two swine, and poultry. The remaining four men are in the employment of Mr. Jas. Dorsey and receive 10s. per week, two with houses free have cows, calves, swine, donkey, and poultry, land filled and sowed by employer.

Crook Street and Cold Blow contain 51 working men, nine of which are constantly employed, three men at St. Bridget's Convent, and receive weekly 10s., one of them has a surplus of three roods of land whose property let to three weekly tenants, the remaining two have a surplus, being army pensioners at 2s. a day. St. Patrick's Monastery, five men, 12s. for outside men, 4s. stopped for house, four domestic servants, one at 5s., one at 4s., and one at 1s. 6d. Thomas Dams one man at 2s. per week constant. Mr. John Dwyer, one constant man at 12s. per week. Dr. Fisher, two men 12s. in summer and 10s. in winter. John Farrell, one constant man at 10s. per week, no broken time.

Shannon Road contains 14 working men, one who has constant employment from Mr. Grogan at 10s. per week, he also holds about five acres of land, cow, donkey, swine, and poultry; the remainder have no constant employment, any day when called upon, receive 1s. and dies per day.

Derrough contains 11 working men, three of whom are constant with Mr. Murphy and receive 8s. a week, two of them hold land, cow, donkey, swine, and poultry.

Cappagh contains 15 working men; some have constant employment from Mr. Seale, Clonough, and hold land, have cow, donkey, swine and poultry.

Rushin contains 11 working men, three receive employment from Mr. William Murphy, one receives 10s. per week and house free, another receives 6s. per week, horse and garden free.

Derroughan contains 21 working men, two have 5s. per week with diet in summer and 4s. in winter.

Despark	20
Factory Street	33
Church Street	31
Shannon Street	14
Crook Street and Cold Blow	51
Forest, Spawhill, and Kibberlain	34
broken	11
Derroughan	21
Cappagh	15
Derrough	11
Rushin Road	11
	228 labourers.

Constant men employed in the different divisions . . . 72

146 inconsistent labourers in the different divisions.

B-1
Mount-
Melick

APPENDIX B.

CORRESPONDENCE.—UPPER PART APRIL-MAY, 1892.—
NORTHERN LANDS OF MOUNTMELICK, LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD, DUBLIN, AND MOUNTMELICK BOARD OF GUARDIANS, SUBMITTED BY SECRETARY OF LABOUR FEDERATION ON 17TH APRIL, 1892, IN ANSWER OF COMPLAINT AS TO REFUSAL OF GUARDIANS TO RECONSIDER REIMBURSEMENT OF LABOURERS' RENTING OUTRIGS.

To the CHAIRMAN and MEMBERS of the LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD, DUBLIN.

HON. GENTLEMEN,—

We, the undersigned agricultural labourers resident in this the Mountmelick division of the Mountmelick Union, being denied benefits of the Labourers (Ireland) Acts, 1882 to 1885, by the Board of Guardians acting as the Sanitary Authority for the said Union, notwithstanding that we have complied with the necessary instructions, as the enclosed requisition will show, in sending representation forms properly filled and signed by the requisite number of ratepayers in the month of June 1891, now beg most respectfully to appeal to your Board to take the necessary steps to have these forms considered and an improvement scheme prepared if the forms are found to be correct. We do so because the Guardians have refused to consider them during all the time they are in their keeping, and because they decided not to consider them when they received the enclosed requisition. We are therefore now appealing from the Sanitary Authority to your Board, which power the Act of 1891 gives us, for you to assume the power of the Sanitary Authority. We believe we are acting within our rights, and hope you will favourably consider our appeal, as otherwise we will be altogether denied the benefits of an Act of Parliament which Legislature intended for us. We have gone on sanitary grounds and had the sanitary officer visit and inspect our houses according to application we made to the Guardians when sending them our forms, some of us sent forms previous to June 1891 that were never considered. Any communication your Board may wish

to make to us respecting this appeal can be made through J. Doyle, whom we have appointed from amongst us for the purpose.

No. 17,728/92,

Mountmelick Union.

Local Government Board,

Dublin, 9th May, 1892.

SIR, With reference to the communication dated 25th ultimo, signed by you and others relative to certain "representations" made to the Board of Guardians of Mountmelick Union under the Labourers Acts, I am directed by the Local Government Board for Ireland to forward to you herewith an extract from the Guardians' minutes of 26th ultimo on the subject.

I am, &c.

(Signed) D. MAC BERALES,
Assistant Secretary.

No. 17,728/92.

EXTRACT FROM GUARDIANS' MINUTES.

Dated 30th April 1892.

Read letter from Local Government Board No. 14,071, dated 26th April 1892, forwarding, to be laid before the Board of Guardians for their consideration, a memorial which they have received from certain agricultural labourers resident in the electoral division of Mountmelick, complaining of the failure of the Guardians to take action on representations made to them under the Labourers Acts.

Ordered.—That the Local Government Board be informed that the Board of Guardians have this day taken out contracts for the erection of cottages under the third Provisional Order, 12 in number, there being in all under this scheme 20 cottages. They have also considered the representations under a fourth scheme (Provisional Order of which has been issued) and where those cottages are in a state of advancement, the Guardians further considering the representations alluded to as under a fifth scheme.

APPENDIX C.

MOUNTMELICK UNION.

REVIEW OF CONTRACT PRICES FOR WORKHOUSE SUPPLIES.

Article.	1890.	1891.	Quantity.	Article.	1890.	1891.	Quantity.
White Bread	6 s. d.	6 s. d.		Coal (Wigan)	1 1 0	1 2 6	per ton.
Oatmeal	0 0 2½	0 0 4	per cwt.	Potatoes	0 6 0	0 2 10	per cwt.
Indian Meal	0 12 9	0 11 10	per cwt.	Turf	5 0 0	5 0 0	per 100 bricks.
Rice	0 1 10½	0 1 8	per stone.	Blankets	—	0 8 6	per pair.
New Milk	0 0 6	0 0 9½	per gallon.	Eggs	—	0 3 0	per dozen.
Tea	0 5 6	0 1 6	per lb.	Skirting Calico	0 0 3	0 0 4	per yard.
Sugar	0 0 3	0 0 2	per lb.	Flannel	0 1 2	0 1 0½	per yard.
Eggs	0 0 9½	0 0 8	per dozen.	Cheese	0 0 11	0 0 9	per lb.
Beef	0 0 7	0 0 5	per lb.	Yeast	0 6 3	0 2 2½	per lb.
Soup	1 0 0	1 4 0	per cwt.	Corduroy	0 1 9	0 1 7	per yard.
Candles	—	—	—				

(Signed) RICHARD GOSWORTHY,
Clerk of Union.

26th April, 1892.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON LABOUR.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

I R E L A N D .

R E P O R T

BY

MR. W. P. O'BRIEN, C.B.

(ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER).

ON THE

POOR LAW UNION OF CARLOW,

(CARLOW AND QUEEN'S COUNTIES.)

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APPENDIX A.

Contract prices for provisions in 1885 and 1893.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

To GREGORY DRAGH, Esq., Secretary,
Royal Commission on Labour.

Monkstown, Co. Dublin,
13th June 1888.

SIR, I have the honour to report, for the information of the Royal Commission on Labour, that I arrived in Cork on the 19th ultimo, and that during the interval between that date and the 3rd instant I applied myself to the closest local investigation in my power to institute, into the circumstances and conditions under which the Agricultural Labourer lives and works at the present time in that Union.

2. In pursuance of this object I adopted, on my arrival in the Union, the same course that I have in previous reports described to obtain the fullest possible information on the several points embraced in the scope of my inquiry; and on the 11th ultimo I attended the weekly meeting of the Board of Guardians, for the purpose of explaining to the members the nature of my mission there, and inviting their co-operation in furtherance of it.

3. From the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman, as well as from many other members of that body, I subsequently received the most valuable information and assistance—an observation which applies likewise to the Clerk of the Union, and to the several Medical and other Union Officers to whom, in the course of my investigation, it became necessary for me to make reference.

4. I have, at the same time, to repeat the acknowledgment it has already so frequently fallen to me to make of the cordial and effective aid for which I have been indebted to the officers and men of the Royal Irish Constabulary here, as in every district of the country with which it has been my duty to deal.

5. In addition to Corkow itself I attended, for the purpose of taking the evidence of labourers, farmers, and others, at the following conveniently distributed centres of population; viz.—Borris and Ballinacree in the south; Myshall, Ballin, and Tullow in the east; Milford, Leaghall, and Fenagh in the centre; Bagginacree in the south-west; and Deonane and Ballinacree in the north-west;—and in the course of my visits to these several quarters I availed myself, as far as practicable, of the opportunity of inspecting the houses of the labourers, both those erected by the Board of Guardians and others, and of making myself generally acquainted with the domestic surroundings, and ordinary circumstances of the occupants.

6. I, as usual, take leave to peruse my detailed report with some observations explanatory of the general character of the district.

7. Corkow is, with the single exception of Leath, the smallest in extent of the thirty-two counties into which Ireland is divided. It comprehends in all an area of only 229,253 acres which, it may be remarked, exceeded in extent in four instances by single Baronies met with in other counties.

Nearly four-fifths of the entire county are comprised in the Poor Law Union of Corkow itself, the remainder being divided between the Unions of Skibblich and Rossmore in the east, and New Ross in the south, which include between them more than one-fifth of the entire area of this county.

8. The Union is an entirely inland district, being watered on its eastern side by the new Slaney, and on the west by the Barrow, and being bounded on the north by the Unions of Athy and Ballymore, on the east by the Unions of Skibblich and Rossmore, south by that of New Ross, and west by those of Kilkenny, Carlow, and Abbeyleigh.

It is divided for Poor Law purposes into 45 separate Electoral Divisions of which 34, with an area of 148,630 acres, or four-fifths of the entire, are situated in the County Corkow, and 11, with an area of 37,134 acres, or one-fifth of the entire, in the Queen's County.

The area of the whole Union is 185,164 acres, and the Poor Law Valuation 159,064, which, being divided into the area and population, gives an average of 16s. 2d. per acre, and 4s. 3d. 3d. per head of the present population of 36,067, as against 41,120 the census return for 1881, and 45,734 in 1871—this being equivalent to a reduction of

5,053 or 12.5 per cent, and of 9,667 or more than 21 per cent of the population of the years 1881 and 1871 respectively.

9. The total number of holdings in the Union, including in the valuation, however, both town and country ratings—was 9,576—which, divided into the area and valuation, gives for each an average of 19 acres in extent, with a valuation of 12s. 3d. 3d.

10. The general appearance presented by the surface of the country though undulating considerably, is that of a fairly level and quite exceptionally well-wooded plain, but in the north-western extremity—constituting the south-eastern corner of the Queen's County—the land becomes more hilly and uneven, and in this quarter of the Union are encountered extensive beds of softest coal.

In the south-eastern extremity of the Union the land becomes poorer in character and here there is an extensive range of mountains encountered, the principal of which—Mount Leinster—rises to a height of more than 2,500 feet above the level of the sea.

11. The geological character of the several districts is a good deal diversified.

Denoting a line from north to south through the centre of the Union, the soil of the entire country lying to the east of this runs on granite. To the west of this line the formation is of the limestone strata, succeeded by beds of shale and limestone, and to which, in the north-western section of the Union, the coal measures of the Queen's County, to which reference has been already made.

12. The nature of the soil may be pronounced to be generally good, the average valuation per acre being, it has been seen, over 16s., but there are great diversities as to this presented in different parts of the Union.

In some places the prevailing character is that of a light gravel, in others it is either a good loam, or clay, while in less favoured localities it is found to be poor, sometimes wet, and, generally speaking, of inferior value.

The diversity observable in that respect will be more conveniently explained by the following illustrations extracted from the rate books, and showing the ratio borne by valuation to area in each of the five most favourably and most unfavourably circumstanced of the rural Electoral Divisions respectively, viz.—

No. 1. Inferior Soil.

Electoral Division	Area	Valuation	Valuation per acre
Ballinacree	Acres 2,777	£ 1,152	s. d. 1 9
Ardsleigh	4,113	1,545	0 8
Borris	4,210	1,545	0 8
Myshall	4,360	1,775	0 4
Garryhill	4,359	2,006	0 4

No. 2. Superior Soil.

Electoral Division	Area	Valuation	Valuation per acre
Shanag	5,915	5,145	18 5
Kilbarnon	4,950	4,270	18 0
Ballynacree	4,517	3,651	15 4
Johnstown	5,851	4,421	15 2
Marsh	5,187	3,555	17 4
Entire Union	185,164	159,064	16 2

13. The use of the farms ranges from about 30 to 60 acres—40 being probably as close an approximation to a fair general average as it would be possible to make.

N.—KILCARLOW. There are some large farms, however, to be met with—of from 500 to 500 acres and upwards in extent—and on the other hand, as to balancing these, numerous very small holdings are also to be noted.

Number of yielded farms. In connection with this point the list supplied by the number of qualified jurors returned from this Union may here, as in other cases, be referred to.

The qualification prescribed as to this in the County Carlow is a valuation of 40*l.* in the country and 10*l.* in the towns, and the total number qualified under these heads in Carlow Union is 672; of whom 217, or nearly one-fourth of the entire number, possess the higher qualification of 100*l.* valuation, entitling them to serve as special jurors.

Number of farms. 14. The system of farming adopted throughout the different districts of this Union is of a mixed character—embracing dairy farming, and the rearing and fattening of dry stock and sheep, in combination with tillage, which, though much less now than in past times, is still pursued on a substantial scale.

The proportion of the farms usually devoted to tillage varies considerably in different quarters, according to the nature of the soil and its greater or less adaptability to this purpose.

It is variously estimated at from a fifth to nearly one-half of the holdings; but a fourth would appear to be about a fair general average.

Crops. The crops grown are for the most part oats, barley, potatoes, mangolds, and turneps; with, in certain cases, where the existing conditions are found favourable to it, some, but not much, wheat.

Hay. A good deal of the land is, also, of course, necessarily devoted each year to mowing for the winter feed of the cattle; but the processes of cutting and saving this crop are now largely effected by the use of machinery, and farmers at the present time usually employ an enormous number of men only a limited amount of manual labour.

As between dairy and dry stock farming the latter would appear to be in most places the decidedly predominating element at the present time. The former, it has been represented to me, shows, in some districts at least, a tendency to decline of late, owing to the great difficulty experienced in finding servants suitable for this particular purpose. How far this may be more I cannot pronounce, but the circumstances referred to, at least, I think, unlikely to have operated to some extent, at least, in the direction indicated; as it will be seen from what I have stated on this subject in paragraph 21 of my report on Kilmallock that were it not for the services of immigrants actually obtained from Kerry and West Cork, the many dairy farmers of that Union would find themselves placed in a somewhat similar predicament in regard to this.

Scale of labour. Be the fact as to this, however, as it may, the better industry still continues to constitute a very material factor in the agricultural operations of the district, as may be judged from the fact that during the past twelve months as many as 4,142 bales, of 75 lbs. each, were sold by the neighbouring farmers to the three local buyers established in the town of Carlow, at prices ranging from 80*s.* to 106*s.* per cwt., this being in addition to what was, during the same period, disposed of in Athy, from certain portions of the Queen's County, to which that market is the most adjacent.

Carlow market. 15. The Union comprehends within its limits five towns of more or less local importance, viz., Carlow, population, 6,649; Bagenalstown, 1,991; Tullow, 1,773; Leightonstown, 744; and Boreen, 518; in addition to which are to be noted the three small villages of Belleekinsloe, 119; Ballin, 118; and Aricks, 77.

Athy market. Of these Carlow, which is at once the local capital of both the county and the Union, is by far the most considerable and important in every respect.

Towns. It stands on the eastern bank of the river Barrow, into which another river, the Barren, flows at the southern end of the town.

It is entitled to take rank as a specially thriving and prosperous country town of its class, as well as being, in most respects, a particularly orderly and well regulated one, not unaptly, I think, denominated by an Irish historian as being "a place of high antiquity, with an air of modern greatness."

Carlow. The towns of Bagenalstown and Tullow, though of only secondary importance as compared with Carlow, are nevertheless by no means insignificant, as centres of commercial and general industry, the prosperous agricultural districts of which they constitute respectively the local business capitals.

Distribution of estates. 16. The ownership of property in this Union is a good deal divided. The principal estates to be noted are those of the Right Hon. H. Russell, the Earl of Bessborough, Mr. W. M. Havergill, Sir Thomas P. Butler, Bart., Mr. D. B. Peck-Bonfield, Mr. Newton, Mr. Browne-

Clayton, Sir Charles Gault, Bart., Mrs. Adair, Mr. Devereux, and Mr. Burton, the majority of whom reside in the Union on their respective estates, and the remainder in the counties immediately adjoining.

17. As a rule the labourers in this Union appear, as far as I could judge, to be conscientiously placed as regards proximity to their daily work.

They are both concentrated in towns and villages, and also dispersed over the rural districts, partly in houses on the lands of the farmers who employ them, and others, and partly also in cottages erected on sites specially selected by the Board of Guardians.

In some instances the distance to be travelled is said to be as much as two or three miles, but these are certainly altogether exceptional cases, and generally speaking it is probable that it is rarely found necessary to exceed a half or three-fourths of a mile each way going to and returning from work.

18. The financial position of the Union may be pronounced to be, upon the whole, very favourable.

There are six houses either wholly or partly included in the County Carlow portion of the Union, and the percentage of the two assessments on these for County rate in 1892 ranged from 1*s.* 8*d.* to 2*s.* 4*d.*, with an addition of 6*d.*, in the case of portions of two houses to meet a railway guarantee.

There are two houses partly included in the Queen's County portion of the Union, and the assessment on these for the same period was in one case 1*s.* 7*d.*, and in the other 3*s.* 3*d.*

The poor rate for the present year ranges from a minimum of 1*s.* 6*d.* to a maximum of 3*s.* 8*d.*, in the Town Electoral Division of Tullow, but the rate for the entire Union does not exceed an average of 1*s.* 8*d.*, to which there is only to be added the amount of 35*l.* included in the present rate in repayment of the second instalment of the debt under the Seed Supply Act of 1890-91.

19. The following are the comparative statistics of pauperism for the years 1889 and 1892 respectively, viz.:

	1889.	1892.
Armen number in workhouse	450	405
" " on outdoor relief	638	715
Total	1,088	1,127
General average cost of maintenance per week	s. d. 2 20	s. d. 2 8

From these figures it will be observed that though the decline in the number of workhouse inmates has been but slight within the decade quoted, there has been a reduction in the total number relieved of 175, or about 15 per cent., while the average weekly cost of maintenance has, it will be observed, fallen during the same period by 2*d.* per head.

20. This concludes the several preliminary observations it seemed desirable I should offer by way of preface to my report, which I shall now proceed to submit, dealing with each of the prescribed heads of inquiry in the same order that I have hitherto inevitably observed.

I. SUPPLY OF LABOUR.

21. In some districts it is represented that the supply of good and capable labourers is found to be insufficient to meet the demand during the busy seasons; but, as this has now led to a very general resort at such times to the use of agricultural machinery, it is probable that the inconvenience experienced from this cause is only partial and of short duration.

There has been in this respect a decided decrease in the supply during the last 10 or fifteen years.

22. There is no immigration here of labourers of any class or of any season.

It is stated, on nearly all hands, that the labourers of the present day are, as a rule, neither as efficient nor as willing workers as those of former times, owing to the fact that the congregation drain which has been experienced has been here, as elsewhere, mainly supplied from the ranks of the best and most capable of the class.

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER.

As compared with other districts there is no perceptible difference, the falling off experienced in this respect being of almost universal application.

II. CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT.

Consider-
able varia-
tion in

23. The conditions of engagement vary a good deal in this, as, indeed, it may be said, in every Union that I have visited.

Except in the case of resident farm labourers, who are always engaged for a quarter, half-year, or year, the hiring is usually by the week,—in hay seasons often only by the day—but notwithstanding this fluctuation the same labourers are commonly retained in their employment for years—in fact during good seasons.

Great variety
of contract
and

24. As regards the all important question of continuity or continuity of employment throughout the year, there is the same diversity of statement here that has been met with I may say, everywhere else—the labourers in many cases representing that they are left in complete idleness for periods variously estimated at from a quarter to more than half the year—while competent witnesses on the other side have expressed a very confident opinion that, at the present time, no "industrious and capable labourer," if willing to accept reasonable wages, need be idle in any part of the Union during any of the recognized working days.

Town is
labourers.

25. It is chiefly, though not by any means exclusively, from amongst the labourers concentrated in the towns and villages that complaints under this head are heard, and there also, I think, is no doubt that amongst this class are to be met numerous cases in which idleness and consequent privation and suffering are experienced as the common lot during the winter period—though it is not always at all easy to determine, with strict justice, how far this state of things is referable to circumstances beyond control, and how far the responsibility for it rests, in reality, with the labourers themselves.

Partly by
constant
labourers

In the rural districts of Carlow Union I believe that failure to obtain fairly constant employment must be a matter of rare occurrence, except perhaps as regards a class of labourers who have frequently attended before me to make complaint as to this,—namely, men who are, in reality, partially beyond their labour, and who are consequently not likely to be engaged by ordinary employers save under pressure of necessity or during the fabled seasons.

No doubt
in 1872.

26. In my report on Nass Union—paragraph 14—I took occasion to advert to the fact that these the labourers engaged, in quite exceptional degree, the great advantage of having a class of resident gentry living continuously at home, and, amongst other benefits conferred by them, affording to the working population of their respective districts much valuable employment throughout the year.

The same observation applies in at least an equal degree in the present instance, and no doubt can, I think, be entertained that to this circumstance may, in a very great measure, be ascribed the order and comparatively prosperous condition of the working classes generally by which I have been forcibly impressed in the course of my visits to the different districts of the Carlow Union.

27. A few extracts from the evidence obtained by me under this head will best illustrate the diverse points of view from which the position of affairs as to this is regarded by witnesses of undoubted authority and intimately acquainted with the facts of the case in their respective districts.

In the southern extremity of the Union the Fear Law Guardian of the district—an exceptionally intelligent, active, and useful local man—who was especially recommended to me as a valuable witness to be examined as to the subject of my inquiry, says as to this—

Evidence.

"I farm 88 Irish acres (144 statute), I have also business and county road contracts. I employ on an average 25 men throughout the year."

"There is not in the County Carlow an industrious man who cannot get constant work."

"I consider the general condition of the labourer here is fairly satisfactory, and where men are idle it is their own fault."

28. An extensive resident proprietor, in the same quarter, says on this subject—

"The supply of labour in this district is very much less than the demand. Farmers are telling out that they can get no labourers. I know of several cottages on farmers' lands (unoccupied, and which they would gladly let at a nominal rent, if they could get labourers to occupy them, and work for them. The farms with sons and daughters grown up

is the man who is making farming pay now-a-days," and he adds further—

"The farmers have only themselves to blame for the dearth of labour. When there were plenty of labourers they treated them badly—got the very most they could out of them, worked them when they wanted them in the spring and summer, and turned them away in winter."

"If they had employed their labourers at a fair wage all the year round, and treated them fairly, there would be no dearth of labour now."

29. A medical officer of many years' experience in an important district in the eastern side of the Union says—

"The town agricultural labourers have improved but little, and I fear that they are not likely to, as many of them are not fond of work, and give little satisfaction to their employers."

"One drawback in making the labourers so independent of the farmers is they are not so anxious for continual employment, and this of course tends to raise wages, and make labour scarce;" and he further adds as to this—

"I should say the demand for labour is greater than the supply. No industrious steady labourer need be a day idle."

30. In illustration of a somewhat different standpoint from which the same question is viewed by other witnesses, I submit a few additional questions from the evidence.

Another experienced medical officer residing in an important town district on the western side of the Union says—

"THE SUPPLY OF LABOUR IS IN EXCESS OF THE DEMAND DURING THE WINTER, AND AS A CONSEQUENCE A GREAT MANY ARE UNEMPLOYED AT THAT TIME OF YEAR."

"In the spring there is of course more work, and the employment is better, while in the harvest it is in excess of the supply, and wages run very high."

He further adds on the subject—

"I do not think the agricultural labourer can ever find constant work, except in those cases where a man is in fixed employment with one owner, because of course there is more work to be done at one time of the year than another."

"Farmers object to having many constant men, as they have not work for them in the slack season, and as a consequence there is a large floating population of labourers who are unemployed for parts of the year. The natural result of this is that they are often very destitute; but at the same time their best friends cannot deny that they are most independent."

"I HAVE KNOWN A HOUSE WHERE OVER TWO POUNDS WEEKLY WAS REQUIRED STEADILY, AND YET THE MOMENT A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY GOT LIL AN APPRECIATION WAS MADE FOR OUTDOOR RELIEF."

31. The following is an extract from the evidence of the Secretary of the "Carlow Labour Union" on this subject.

He says—

"I know the agricultural labourers in Carlow. I put them down at 150, in town and suburbs—a radius of an Irish mile all round."

"They are not able to get fairly constant work throughout the year."

"I would say they have six months agricultural work, three months at jobs about the town, and three months they are partially idle, except odd jobs—this would be the case with about two-thirds of them."

32. One further extract which has, I think, rather an important bearing as the evidence last quoted, will suffice under this head.

The Secretary of the "Carlow Branch of the National Foresters" says—

"I am Secretary of the 'Irish National Foresters'—which includes landowners and agricultural labourers."

"We have 46 or 47 members—it is only a year started here."

"I think the agricultural labourers want better homes."

"As regards allotments for the labourers in town, discrimination would be necessary. Some would and some would not turn them to useful account."

"The class of agricultural labourers in this town are of an inferior description—consisting of many young lads, and many old men."

"I DON'T THINK THERE ARE MANY BOND FIDEL AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS HERE THAT IT WOULD BE PRACTICABLE TO DEFERRE OVER THE COUNTRY."

R.-EL. GARDNER.
Hours of work.
33. The hours of work are usually in summer from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. with two hours for meals, and in winter from daylight to dark, breakfast being in the latter case usually taken before the commencement of work, and only one hour allowed for dinner.

The time devoted to labour would amount, as a rule, to about ten hours daily in summer time, occasionally, perhaps, eleven—and about two hours less in winter; the time occupied in going to and from work varies a good deal, and is not in this estimate taken into account.

Family labour.
34. Sunday labour is very limited, and is confined, altogether to work which their nature cannot in anywise dispense with or deferred.

III. WAGES AND EARNINGS.

Rate of wages.
35. The general rates of wages at the present time allowed in Callow Union are, where no rate is given 5s. and 10s. a week, and where that—usually consisting of two males—is given, 5s. and 5s. But 5s. and 5s. respectively are probably the rates most commonly allowed by farmers, though special cases are occasionally met with in which individual labourers receive as much as 11s. and 12s. a week.

In some instances the wages given with food are said to fall as low as 4s. in the winter, and to rise to 7s. in summer, but this, I apprehend, is not very common.

There are also several cases to be noted in which only 5s. are paid without food, but this too, I think, is not common, or, perhaps, even a very frequent occurrence.

Hours of work.
In and about the town of Callow a somewhat higher rate prevails, and there 2s. a day would probably be the average wage.

Resident farm servants.
In the case of resident farm servants the wages range from 8s. to 14s. a year, all found, according to skill and experience—but 10s. and 12s. appear to be about the most ordinary rates paid in such cases.

Piece-work.
36. There is little or no piecework to be noted here.

Perquisites and allowances.
37. In haytime and harvest the labourers are paid either daily or weekly in milk—ordinarily the labourers have no perquisites or allowances in addition to the rates of wages I have quoted. In the case of the resident gentry, however, who themselves are, in some instances, large farmers and employers of labour, substantial advantages are, in addition to what has been stated, enjoyed by their permanent labourers, such as free houses with gardens, or free potato grounds—frequently tilled and manured for them by the owner, and sometimes, as in the case of herbs, grazing is allowed for one or more cows—or milk at either given price, or is sold to them at a reduced price, also a certain allowance of fuel is sometimes given.

Perquisites are likewise often given in such cases of articles of food, clothing, and bedding at Christmas time, and assistance in various other ways is frequently extended, as in the event of illness, accident, &c.

Perquisites.
In certain special cases, too, small pensions are, I learn, sometimes granted here to labourers who have spent many years in their employment.

Perquisites and allowances.
Where farmers give their labourers either a free house, or free potato ground, I believe the usual practice to be to make on the one side some reduction, say, 1s. to 1s. 6d. a week, according to circumstances and accommodation, in the wages allowed.

Other considerations.
38. It can hardly be said that any wages are earned by the ordinary class of agricultural labourers in the rural districts of this Union, on occupations other than agricultural, at any season—but in certain towns where, as will be hereafter explained in the course of this report, **MALTING** is done or has extensively existed on, many labourers who follow agricultural work during part of the year are during about eight months of it enabled to earn wages of about 14s. to 15s. weekly at this special branch of local industry—which circumstance is true to admit of their earning themselves at the high rates of agricultural wages obtainable in harvest time, never less than from 2s. 6d. to 3s. 6d., and even 4s. a day at that season.

Malting.
39. The estimated annual earnings of the different classes of ordinary labourers who succeed in obtaining constant employment are, with food from 13s. to 15s. 12s., and without food from 23s. 8s. to 25s.

Harvest wages.
Labourers, who are specially skilled, and hence receive about 24s. 12s. to 31s. 4s. with in many cases allowances of a more or less substantial description, but to which it is impossible to affix a specific money value.

Annual earnings.
40. The earnings of women and children and of labourers who, like them, are only seasonally and not constantly employed, constitute, no doubt, a considerable addition to the resources of the families here as elsewhere, but they are too variable and indefinite to be accurately estimated by any fixed standard, as already explained in other reports relating to this subject.

Women and children.
41. The earnings of women and children and of labourers who, like them, are only seasonally and not constantly employed, constitute, no doubt, a considerable addition to the resources of the families here as elsewhere, but they are too variable and indefinite to be accurately estimated by any fixed standard, as already explained in other reports relating to this subject.

IV. COTTAGE ACCOMMODATION.

41. If in the neighbouring Union of Mountmellick—the last surveyed by me—it became my very disagreeable duty to record the wrong feeling of dissatisfaction entertained in that quarter with respect to the entirely inadequate and disappointing manner in which the powers conferred by the Labourers' Act, 1883-91, were being exercised by the local authority there, it is a satisfaction to be able to note, on the present occasion, that no similar imputation of remissness could, with any show of justice, be possibly directed, in this connection against the administrative action of the Board of Guardians of Callow Union. They have there manifestly shown themselves to be fully alive to their responsibilities in this important matter, and appear, it is only right to testify, to have addressed themselves to the executive duty imposed on them in connexion with it in a thoroughly earnest, liberal, and practical spirit so far as the facts have come under my cognizance.

The total number of cottages for which the rural official sanction has been up to this time obtained is 170. Of these 145 have been already completed and occupied by labourers, at a total cost of about 20,400l., or 120s. per cottage—and 18 are still in course of erection—the remaining seven having been, for sufficient reasons, abandoned.

It is now proposed to seek for the necessary authority to erect as many as 150 more, thus bringing the total accommodation provided in this way to over 320 cottages in all.

The cottages already occupied are let to the labourers at the certainly not at all excessive rent of 1s. a week, and afford accommodation as follows, viz.:—Kitchen or living room 12 6 x 18 (open to roof), two bedrooms (labeled) 8 0 x 8 6 x 8 feet high, left over two bedrooms, sanitary 3 6 x 5 6, piggery, privy, and ONE HALF ACRE of land.

42. In the new scheme a somewhat different plan has been adopted, and the future accommodation provided will consist of—

Kitchen	14 6 x 11 0	} Cost 100l. 12 feet high in centre, 8 at sides.
Two bedrooms 1	10 6 x 7 11	
2	7 0 x 7 11	
Store room	9 6 x 7 11	

Piggery, cow house, privy, and ONE ACRE of land.

43. In connexion with this subject a few questions from the evidence furnished to me in the course of my inquiry may be of some interest, and are accordingly here submitted.

A medical officer in the west of the Union, already quoted under another head, says as to this—

"The cottage accommodation in this district was very bad, but much has been done by the Board of Guardians 'in providing excellent cottages, built under the Labourers' Act' in recent years. These cottages are eagerly sought after by the labourers, and are let at a nominal rent, but much more might still be done with advantage in the same direction."

Another medical officer speaking as to this, with the authority of an experience of over 20 years, says—

"There is no doubt but the position of the agricultural labourers has been very much improved as to these cottage-accommodation."

"The introduction of the Labourers' Act has given many of them who lived in bad thatched houses good slated cottages, and the addition of the half acre of land has given them great facilities for the growing of vegetables, &c., which are a great boon to them; and at 1s. per week they are very cheap, and valuably they have fifty of them. These are not now a great many labourers' cottages in my district that I would consider as being 'unfit for human habitation.'"

A third medical officer, also already quoted, speaking with reference to the southern extremity of the Union, says—

"Since the Labourers' (Ireland) Act came into force and has been acted upon, there is a vast improvement in the housing of the labourers in this district, and I am glad to see the labourers are continuing to build these houses. They are hardly good but cold, owing to the plan they are built on, I believe this to be the chief point complained of by the occupants."

"I should prefer seeing more of them built attached in pairs, for several reasons. I also think the sleeping rooms are usually made too small."

"The ordinary old thatched cottages are, of course, still numerous, and many of them have very bad roofs, owing to the terms upon which labourers and farmers are now, it is much more difficult for the labourer to procure straw for thatch than formerly."

One further question as to this will suffice.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

Labourers' Act, 1883-91.

Number of cottages.

Best.

Accommodation.

Proposed cottages under the Act.

Evidence.

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURER.

An influential resident proprietor in the north-eastern section of the Union, himself a very extensive farmer, and who takes a leading and most useful part in all matters of local administration, speaking with reference to the cottage accommodation and gardens of the agricultural labourers, says—

"These are much improved in the last 20 years—yet more requiring them—but population having decreased so many houses are not required."

"I do not consider that, as a rule, they are consequently placed, and would like to see more together, in firms a village at a cross roads, and in a central position."

"The new cottages are generally well-built and fairly commodious, but might be better at some cost."

"I do not consider they are kept as clean and neat as they should be, nor are the allotments or gardens filled as they should be."

SPECIAL INQUIRY.

"SUPERVISION AND INSPECTION ARE ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY AND BY A PERSON OF A HIGHER CLASS AND MORE INDEPENDENCE THAN A RELIEVING OFFICER."

"I accompanied judges for cottage prices, given by London Farmers' Society, through the Carlisle County cottages and got many about here to compare, and they kept both cottages and gardens in proper order, which is not now done, and which should be seen to under the Labourers' Acts, &c."

THE STATE OF
PROPERTY,
AND OF THE
COTTAGE.

44. While it has been seen, both from the proposed furtheration of the Board of Guardians in the matter, and the testimony of the very competent witnesses just quoted by me in connection with the subject, that the housing of the labouring classes in the Union still demands, in several directions, material improvement, it should be added that in no Union that I have visited does so much appear to have been done as here in the past in this respect by the owners of property, several of whom have erected upon their estates some excellent cottages, which are either held free by labourers in their own's employment, or are let to others at, I believe, usually very moderate rents.

MR. BROWN.

In illustration of this it may be mentioned that on the estate of the largest owner of property in the Union—Mr. Brown—between forty and fifty median labourer cottages appear to have been thus erected within the last thirty years or so, at a cost of, I believe, something like 750 to 800, each—and when visiting the little town of Borne, in the south of the Union, I also observed some very neat houses of this class, which as I was informed, had been provided by the liberality of the local proprietor—the late Mr. Liddington—and the same observation applies to several other properties—notably amongst the number may be mentioned that of the Earl of Beauchamp.

MR. LIDDINGTON.
OTHER
COTTAGES
ON THE
Estate of
Borne.

45. It is, however, in the case of "rotter tenements" on the lands of the farmers that the accommodation is most badly and most economically complained of by the labourers as well as others, and in regard to these, no doubt can, I think, exist that little or nothing in the way of necessary repair is now ever done by these responsible for it.

THE STATE OF
PROPERTY,
AND OF THE
COTTAGE.

46. In most of the towns, too, a great deal of room for improvement in this respect undoubtedly exists in numerous instances.

COTTAGE.

The worst cases of this description that arise under my notice were in the towns of Tallow, where I visited, in company with the Constabulary Sergeant, some exceedingly wretched hovels, situated in two localities known as "the Mulhane" and "Pig Lane."

COTTAGE.

In the principal towns of the Union—Callow, itself—the labourer appears to be, as a rule, fairly provided for in the regard to the housing of the working class of Bagenalstown, Borne, and Leightonbridge, as well as in some of the small villages, the accommodation, though upon the whole fairly satisfactory, was, in several particular instances that came under my notice, both INADEQUATE and BAD—internally as well as externally.

MR. LIDDINGTON.
OTHER
COTTAGES
ON THE
Estate of
Borne.

V. GARDEN ALLOTMENTS.

THE STATE OF
PROPERTY,
AND OF THE
COTTAGE.

47. In my recent report on Kilsnooth Union—paragraph 30—I made reference to the fact that I had there met with the first and only instance that had come under my notice, in the course of my inquiry, in which a Board of Guardians had acted on the powers conferred upon them by section 14 of 48 & 49 Vict. cap. 77 and section 12 of 45 & 46 Vict. cap. 56, with respect to providing rural allotments for the accommodation of labourers resident in towns and villages—a subject of much importance at the present time, and one on which I found it necessary to dwell somewhat in my recent Mountainlick report in paragraphs 27 and 43—B respectively.

I am on the present occasion, however, in a position to record another instance in which the provisions in question have been or rather is about to be applied.

During my stay in Carlisle Union a representation, received from ten labourers resident in the town of Bagenalstown, praying for allotments of a STAFF OF AGES each, was taken into consideration by the Board of Guardians, with the result that, in three instances, the application was rejected—for the very urgent reason that the parties making it were railway servants, and not agricultural labourers at all—but in the seven remaining cases it was decided to comply with the prayer addressed to the Board, to the extent of providing the applicants with an allotment in a convenient situation of ONE ACRE each—this being judged—and probably rightly judged, to be as much land as labourers could, under such circumstances, be expected to successfully cultivate.

This subject was first passed on my attention, I may observe, while engaged at Callow, where the project was warmly advocated, in his evidence before me by the Consulting Sanitary Officer of that Union, but, as stated in paragraph 30 of my report, other witnesses there, not less friendly to the labourers, expressed a very cordial opinion that, if such allotments were provided for them, they could not be depended on to take the trouble of manuring and cultivating them.

I was then, and I am still of the opinion, that the doubt so expressed was quite just as regards a large proportion of the class in question,—but recent experience has tended very much to confirm me in the conviction that it does not by any means apply to all, or even, probably, to the majority of them.

In illustration of this I may be permitted to refer to certain facts having a very direct bearing on the point, which came under my notice when visiting the town of Leightonbridge on the 15th ultimo.

The number of agricultural labourers at the present time resident in that town is 74, and of these 47, or nearly two-thirds of the entire, are, I find, this year in possession of plots of some potato ground, the use of which has been obtained by them from the neighbouring farmers, at distances varying from one half to one and a half miles from the town.

Of the number 26 were, I found, in a situation to manure the entire of the ground required by them, and were in consequence, in accordance with the practice that obtains in the locality, exempted from paying any rent. 22 were able to manure part of the land they required, and for the rest they pay a rent at the rate of 12s. an acre, while the remaining 5, having collected no manure, have rented the entire ground at the same rate, 12s. the acre.

These facts furnish, it appears to me, a very significant illustration both of the value set by a large section of the town labourers on the acquisition of the accommodation, and of the efforts they are ready to make to secure the boon for themselves and their families.

Except as just described, the only land of any extent in the occupation of labourers in this Union may be said to consist of the plots attached to the cottages built by the Board of Guardians, or those given by some farmers and other employers free to their own labourers; but as a rule it is understood that, at least in most parts of the Carlisle Union, no great difficulty is usually experienced by labourers in obtaining as much concrete potato ground as they use in a position to manure—the advantage derived by the land in this way being apparently more attractive to the farmers than even the payment of the very high rent of 12s. the acre, which appears to be usually exacted by them in other cases.

48. There are no cow-runs or cow pastures to be met with in this Union.

Grass for a cow or two is sometimes given as a "privilege" to breads, or other labourers of a special kind by large farmers,—but cases of this sort are rare and exceptional; and the live stock possessed by the class generally may be said to be strictly confined to pigs, poultry and geese—with, occasionally, an ox.

Poultry raising is carried on rather extensively in many of the districts, and is, in such cases a source of substantial profit to the labourers; as is also, to a large extent, the breeding of pigs.

Goats are only met with, as a rule, in particular localities. They are chiefly prized, and are most valuable as being often the only available means of obtaining a supply of fresh milk for the children, but, being very injurious to young timber, their presence is, not unusually, usually discountenanced where mischief of that sort is likely to ensue.

There are no bees to be met with anywhere, so far as I have seen.

MR. LIDDINGTON.

MR. LIDDINGTON.

MR. LIDDINGTON.

MR. LIDDINGTON.

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MR. LIDDINGTON.

VI. BENEFIT SOCIETIES.

49. Under this head in every Union hitherto visited by me, the inevitable answer has been that no such society was known to have any existence there.

In one district of the Carlow Union, however, an exception to this rule is met with.

At Ballin Turlin, the property of Sir Thomas Butler, the Chairman of the Board of Guardians, a "clothing club" for the benefit of his permanent labourers has been for more than thirty years established, and appears to have worked satisfactorily.

It includes, I find, at present 22 members, who subscribe monthly not more than 1s. nor less than 6d. each, and who receive back at the end of the year the amount subscribed by them, together with interest at the rate of 3d. for every shilling.

In the year 1891 the amount subscribed in this way was £11. 13s. to which was added for interest 2s. 11s., thus increasing the amount paid to the members to 15s. 6d.

Though the recorded operations in this case are, of course, only limited, the principle underlying the arrangements described is a very important one, and it is, I think, much to be desired that the labourers generally could be induced to cultivate the same habit of periodically saving something, however small, as a provision for the future, a thing it is to be feared now rarely done by them.

VII. TRADE UNIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

50. There are two Labour Organizations to be noted in this Union at the present time, but both are of recent origin, and apparently rather limited in their scope and operations.

One, already referred to, is designated the "IRISH NATIONAL FORESTERS."

It has been established in the Town of Carlow for about twelve months, and has 46 or 47 members—including both tradesmen and agricultural labourers, chiefly the former.

The second, also already referred to as being established in the Town of Carlow, is entitled the "LABOUR UNION," and has only been in existence there since April last.

It includes, I understand, only about 34 or 35 members—of whom only six or so belong to the class of agricultural labourers.

The statistics of the two organizations—both exceedingly respectable and intelligent men—were examined by me, and I have already, in paragraph 23, given quotations from their evidence.

VIII. GENERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYED.

51. Though in some few cases the usual complaints were made to me by labourers as to the neglect of the farmers here to provide them with more employment and higher wages, and, on the other side, by farmers of the idleness and inefficiency of the labourers, the relations at present existing between the two classes throughout the entire of the Carlow Union have been represented to me to be, upon the whole, of a good and even friendly character—and, as the result of a good deal of personal observation on the subject, I am disposed to accept this as conveying a tolerably accurate description of the actual state of affairs.

52. In commenting in paragraph 48 of my Nass report upon the existence of a similarly satisfactory condition of things in that Union, I ventured to suggest that the healthy relations observable there between the different classes of the community might, in a considerable degree at least, be not unreasonably attributed to the fact of their having the good fortune to possess an exceptionally large number of permanent resident gentry—who devoted themselves creditably to the active discharge of the various local duties of their station, besides affording to the labouring population of their respective districts much constant employment of a very valuable kind.

It may, perhaps, be permitted to me, on the present occasion, and in this connexion, to now add here the expression of the strong impression derived from the visits recently made by me to almost every important part of the Carlow Union, that the same advantages, flowing from a similar source, are fully enjoyed there too at the present time, and, if anything, in a still larger measure, so far as it was open to me to judge—than even in the case of Nass.

IX. THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

53. The improvement in the condition of the agricultural labourers generally at the present time as compared with 10 or 15 years ago, which has been observed upon in

almost every Union visited by me, has also been experienced there on no doubt is at the least an equal degree in Carlow Union.

Several distinct causes, which have been in operation here as elsewhere have obviously contributed to bring about this almost common result: but Carlow being one of the districts in which tillage farming still continues to be pursued upon a tolerably large, though, no doubt, much reduced scale, the constructive influence exercised in certain quarters by a different disposition of affairs in this regard has not been experienced here in at all the same acute form as in some other places.

54. From the statistics quoted in paragraph 8, it has been seen that the emigration drain experienced in this part of the country, amounting to over 22 per cent. within the last two decennial periods, has been considerable, and as it is the almost universal theme of observation that it has been mainly supplied from the ranks of the youngest and most available of the working classes of both sexes, the natural effect has been to create a greatly increased and more constant demand for the labour of those remaining, and, as a necessary consequence of this, a more or less substantial advance in the current rate of wages obtainable by them.

55. Contemporaneously with this there has been experienced during the same period a material reduction in the cost of most of the articles of food, clothing and other necessaries entering into the daily consumption of the working classes. The full effect of this, as an element of improvement in their general condition, may be easily estimated from a reference to the particulars given in the return, inclosed A, herewith appended, and which shows in detail the contract prices paid for the principal workhouse supplies during the years 1883 and 1896 respectively.

56. A further source of improvement in the labourers' condition here, though of course only affecting a certain section of them, is that set forth in paragraph 34, in connexion with the question of their house accommodation; the plots of ground thus provided for them by the Board of Guardians affording not only a means of raising potatoes and vegetables for the use of their families, but also facilities for the pursuit of various domestic industries not previously open to them, and which are, in many instances, now turned by them to very substantial account.

Notwithstanding these several elements of undoubted amelioration in their condition as compared with that of a former period, the evidence received as to their actual state at the present time varies considerably, and it is in many cases decidedly of a more or less unfavorable complexion.

57. Some districts of the country are, of course, much more favourably circumstanced than others as a field for labour, and this goes some, though by no means the whole, way in explanation of the differences of testimony adduced to, and for the full solution of which other causes must be sought.

Little doubt can, I think, exist that as stated to me by several most reliable witnesses few really "CAPABLE and industrious" labourers, willing to undertake constant work at reasonable wages, need now be left at any season in this Union, but the recognized state of "LABOURERS" includes, it is necessary to remember, a considerable number who though they do not know this particular description have nevertheless to live.

In the towns especially are to be found many who, of their own deliberate choice, prefer partial work with high wages, to constant employment at a moderate rate, but, in both towns and country are to be met, in addition to these, a rather numerous body who, though willing to accept whatever they can get, are from age, infirmity, and other causes, little more very frequently than seasonal labourers, whom farmers cannot be reasonably expected, and are not willing to engage, save in cases of absolute necessity.

In addition to the considerations just referred to it must be further here in mind that the position of a labourer with a grown up family, able to add to the general earnings, differs most materially from that of a constantly met with of one having a large number of young and helpless children to provide for, while a scarcely less source of difference is experienced not only in the labourers' own beliefs of life, but still more in the characters of their wives, and the extent to which the latter prove themselves capable of increasing the family resources by attention to the various domestic industries which it is now to so large an extent open to them to cultivate.

58. In illustration of the diversity of testimony received by me under this head, I submit here a few brief quotations from the evidence.

A resident proprietor of long experience in the west of the Union says as to this:—

"The general condition of the agricultural labourers never before was so good in Ireland in my opinion after

THE
AGRICULTURAL
LABOURERS' UNION

Emigration

Increased demand in labour, wages.

Cost of living.

Appendix A.

House accommodation.

Plots of ground.

Domestic industries.

Reduction of demand of labour.

Ballin Turlin clothing club

Irish National Foresters

Labour Union

Statistics

Nass Union

Carlow Union

Comparison with former years

Evidence of resident proprietor

a life-long expenditure—their clothes show it, and the money they have saved and derive from various sources.

"The wages are now nearly double what they were when I was a boy."

59. One of the Poor Rate collectors, an officer of considerable intelligence, and having a long and intimate knowledge of both the farming and labouring classes throughout a large part of the Union, says—

"The general condition of agricultural labourer is good, better, in most cases, than that of small farmers."

60. A Constabulary Sergeant, reporting from a district in the south-eastern extremity of the Union, says—

"In this district the general condition of the labourer is very fair."

Another informant, speaking with respect to an important town district in the west of the Union, says—

"The agricultural labourer in this district is in a fairly good position, as he supplements his earnings by rearing pigs and fowls."

Less favourable estimates, however, than those just quoted come from other quarters.

One of the principal resident proprietors of the Union, and Deputy Lieutenant of the County, speaking of a district near the centre of the Union, says—

"The labourers in this district are undoubtedly poor men, and are greatly hampered in any attempts to improve their condition by the large debts they owe to the shops."

"In numerous cases labourers deal with local shops entirely on credit, and say that weekly earnings into the shop as a lamp, and then get credit for the following week. In many cases they pay their rent when they sell their pig."

"They are, however, I consider, well housed about here, and though wages are small as compared with England, living is of course much cheaper."

61. An active and experienced clerical member of the Board of Guardians resident near Carlow says of the general condition of the agricultural labourer in this Union that it is "improved, but not good."

A Constabulary Sergeant in charge of an important town district says—

"His general condition is a poor one, especially in case of his having a young family, as is mostly the case with all labourers."

"They mostly complain of the long hours of labour and that wages are inadequate to the requirements of a family."

62. One further quotation will conclude my references to this subject.

An exceptionally intelligent and well-informed Constabulary Sergeant, in charge of an important district in the eastern side of the Union, says—

"There is no degradation or acute want amongst the labourers in this district."

"They keep themselves and their families in a rude decency clad. They are very sober and law abiding, and I believe them to be well meaning men generally."

"I am of opinion that many of them with young families find it at times very hard to live."

"There is absolutely no recreation for young men; the want of which is, I think, very much felt at Bunclops."

"They can nearly all read and write (the young men), but there is very little literature of any kind available for them to read."

63. Though this Union is for the most part to be regarded as an essentially agricultural one, there are certain other industries of a more or less important character to be referred to in connection with it.

64. In the north-western corner of the Union—Queen's County—are met some extensive and valuable mines of anthracite coal, which are at present leased and worked by the Clontarf Coal Company.

They are only a few miles distant from the coal fields of the County Kilkenny, in which full reference is made in paragraph 58 of my report on Thomastown Union.

The operations in the present case, however, are on a somewhat more limited scale than those connected with the Castlemore fields, but in both sides the houses appear to be hampered and overcrowded in their entourage by the same cause, namely, the distance of the respective pits, 10 to 12 miles, from any existing railway system, and as a consequence of this, the almost prohibitive cost of distributing the coal at any point southward from the immediate vicinity of the mines.

The annual cost just of coal and carts at these mines is at the present time about 27,000 tons, which at an all round price of about 5s. 6d. per ton at the pit's mouth would

represent a commercial value of not far short of 15,000, but with the aid of railway communication it is stated this amount could be largely and easily augmented.

No reasonable doubt, it may be observed as to this, can, I think, be well entertained that if the present greatly disproportionate cost of transport could be, by any means, sensibly lowered here as well as in the analogous circumstances of the Castlemore mines, already dealt with by me, the practical effect would be, as just suggested, to largely expand the valuable industry and this could hardly fail, it appears to me, to be productive in both cases and to stoke wages than one, of much solid and permanent benefit not only to these immediate localities, but likewise to all the surrounding communities.

The number of men at present employed is 287, viz., 170 underground, and 47 over ground.

Collins men by task 4s. for each "shift" worked, and it is estimated that five shafts can, with ordinary industry, be worked in a week, 10 hours being, it is calculated, sufficient for each shift.

The underground workers earn from 1s. 8d. to 2s. 6d. a day, and the working hours are 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. with allowances of time for meals.

65. There are several industries to be noted in immediate connection with the town of CARLOW.

There is a flour mill worked by steam and water-power. The annual output is about 24,000 sacks, and the number of hands employed in connection with it is 25, at wages ranging from 5s. to, in special cases, 3s. weekly.

There are two malting establishments, the combined annual output of which is about 31,000 barrels, and which employ between them about 25 hands, at wages ranging from 8s. to 12s. per week, for about eight months of the year, 1st of October to the 1st of June.

There is next to be noted an extensive mineral water factory, which affords constant employment to 25 hands, at wages of from 11s. to 25s. per week.

There remain three implement factories, with two saw mills, which between them employ about 59 hands in all, at weekly wages of from 8s. to 12s. with, in special cases, 32s.

66. In BUCKLEBURY the industries are not so numerous as in Carlow, but they are nevertheless of some local importance.

The first to be noted is a flour and meal mill, worked on an extensive scale by Mr. Goodwin, who affords employment, in all, to 33 hands, at weekly wages ranging from 11s. to as high as 25s. in special cases.

In addition to this there are two salting establishments in full operation, for the usual period of eight months in the year. The combined output of the two amounts to 52,000 barrels annually, and they employ about 72 hands at weekly wages of from 12s. to 15s.

67. In the town of LITTLEBARRIDGE there is only one special industry to be noted, viz.—the malting.

There is only one establishment of this description in the town, of which the annual output is about 25,000 barrels, and which affords employment for eight months to about 41 hands, at wages ranging from 7s. to 12s., one receiving as much as 32s.

68. In the little town of BOWEN there are three special industries to be noted, though only of a limited character.

There is a flour and oatmeal mill, which employs ten hands at weekly wages of 7s.

There is also a small factory for the making of tweeds and flannel, which employs these hands, one of whom receives 12 weekly, the others are the owners.

Lastly, there are two small saw mills which employ four men at weekly wages of an average 15s. each.

69. The town of TULLOW does not appear to present any special industries calling for notice here.

There are three flour mills, but they do not appear to be worked at all at the present time, so far as I was able to ascertain.

70. The cases just detailed exhaust the list of the several town industries to be noted at the present time, but there remain two not unimportant ones connected with the little rural station called MURRIS, situated in the Electoral Division of Glacommee, at a distance of a few miles to the south-west of Carlow.

The first of these is a creamery—the only one as yet established in any part of the Union.

The total quantity of milk received there during the past year was 95,550 gallons, which was paid for at the average rate of 4½d. per gallon the separated milk being returned free to the owners.

The number of hands employed in connection with it is four, and the weekly expenditure under the head of wages is about 31 4s.

P. XI.
CARLOW.

Out of transport.

Barrow.

Carlow in connection.

Flour mill.

Malting.

Mineral water factory.

Implement factories and saw mills.

Mineral town.

Flour mill.

Malting.

Flour mill.

Malting.

Flour mill.

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Malting.

Flour mill.

Malting.

Flour mill.

B-XL
Cassowary
Mallory.

Foreign
ministry.

Line
Inquiry—
Cassowary
Mallory.

There is also to be noted here one making establishment, the annual output of which amounts to about 20,000 barrels and which for eight months of the year affords employment to 34 hands at weekly wages of 15s. each.

71. In addition to the two local industries just described another and very important one, now all but extinct, may be referred to here as having some 25 years ago, in the same locality (Clagrenna) given employment to many hands, while it at the same time was the medium of conferring considerable benefit not only on the immediate vicinity but also on several other districts, more or less remote from it, which were dependent on it for their supply of the lime for which Clagrenna was then famous.

A highly valuable correspondent, to whose courtesy I have been largely indebted for much useful and practical information as to the condition of things at the present time (speaking in the country)—in all the public affairs of which he has long and effectively interested himself—speaks with respect to this—

"Lime was and still is a valuable resource for the land in Wicklow and Wexford, and thousands of loads used to be drawn to these counties from Clagrenna."

"This resource has been displaced by superphosphate of lime, and other kindred artificial manures—less bulky—supplied by the dealers in the small towns to the farmers on credit, and therefore offering temptations not given at Clagrenna, but most good farmers agree that lime was most lasting in its benefits to the land, and was not liable to adulteration."

"Anyhow the change of fashion has extinguished a flourishing industry in Clagrenna."

As the result of local inquiry made when visiting the district, I may add as to this that the number of limekilns in full and active operation was formerly 19, and that of those there is now only one which is at all made use of.

X. CONCLUSIONS

Final
conclusion.

72. I have now brought to a close my report on the eleventh session it has been my duty to deal with in the course of the present inquiry, and which is also the last of those of which the survey was assigned to me.

Having entered as fully as it was in my power to do, in the proper places, into the facts bearing on each separate head of my investigation, a very brief summary of some of the principal points brought under my notice will suffice here.

Labourers' complaints.

73. The complaints of the labourers here may be said to divide themselves under four heads, viz. (1) the want of continuous employment throughout the year, (2) the insufficiency of the current wages for the support of their families—the general contention by them as to this being that they should not be less, with constant employment, than be weekly with much daily work, or 55s. weekly where diet is not provided; (3) the want of more and better houses; (4) and lastly, the town labourers desire that

they should be provided with rural allotments, in situations as convenient as possible to their places of abode.

To each of these points I will take leave to refer briefly.

74. The evidence furnished to me leaves no doubt on my mind that nearly all really "good, industrious, and capable" labourers are scarce, except in broken weather, fairly constant employment in every district of the Clackow Union.

Two classes of the labourers, however, present to this rule an unqualified exception, namely—(1) those town labourers who prefer to regular employment casual work at high rates of wages, and (2) old or partially disabled men, who see to a certain extent, though not entirely, past their labour, and who therefore, whether in town or country, only obtain employment at the lighter forms of work, or in hawking times, when farmers cannot afford to be critical.

75. The most ordinary rates of wages that obtain amongst the farmers in the several rural districts of the Union appear to be 6s. with two daily meals, and 9s. without diet.

The addition to this contended for by the labourers themselves cannot, it is obvious, be considered very great, nor, in my opinion, in the least unreasonable; but, as THINGS STAND JUST NOW, the farmers generally are certainly not in a position to concede any increase—however reasonable it may be in the abstract—and this, in numerous instances, labourers themselves have most fully acknowledged in their evidence before me.

76. That a further extension of the Labourers' Dwelling Acts is called for in several parts of the Union no man, I think, exists to doubt; but it has been seen that not only have the Board of Guardians already shown themselves quite sensible of what is called for at their heads in regard to this important matter, but that measures are at present in progress for undertaking largely extended operations in the same direction.

77. Two questions of providing RURAL ALLOTMENTS for labourers resident in the towns and villages appear to be, of late, daily growing in importance and public favour, and rightly so, in my mind.

I have already entered so fully, however, into the subject, in paragraph 26, as well as in my recent Month-meeting report—paragraphs 37, 45, and 46—that nothing remains to be here added with respect to it—except, perhaps, that it may be permitted to me to observe that the general adoption of such a scheme—SUBJECT TO PROPER RESTRICTIONS AND LIMITATIONS—seems amongst many other advantages to present almost the only feasible means of practically ameliorating the condition of that particular and rather numerous class of town or village labourers who, through no fault of their own, do not, and, it is to be apprehended, are not at any way likely to command that continuity of employment, the want of which they so urgently represent.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. P. O'BRIEN,
Assistant Commissioner.

The
Assistant
Towns
Labourers
—
Constant
employ-
ment.

Wages.

Some
generous
con-
sider-
ation.

Allotment.

APPENDIX A.

CARLOW UNION

List of Contract Prices in March.

		1883.	1882.
Best white bread	per 4 lbs.	2 0 0	2 0 0
" brown "	" "	2 0 5	2 0 3
" beef and mutton (without bone)	" lb.	2 0 7	2 0 4
On bones or knuckle (12 lbs weight)	each	2 2 0	2 1 7
General	per ton	13 0 0	12 15 0
Indian meal	" "	4 10 0	5 0 0
Tea	" lb.	4 1 10	4 1 5
Sugar	" cwt.	1 4 10	0 17 10
Whiskey	" gall.	4 17 0	4 15 0
Milk	" "	0 0 7	0 0 5
Corn flour	" lb.	0 0 4	0 0 3
Eggs	" doz.	0 0 10	0 0 10
Soap	" cwt.	0 16 0	0 16 0
Butter	" lb.	1 6 10	1 3 4
Milk candles	" lb.	0 0 4	0 0 4
Dye candles	" "	0 0 4	0 0 4
Whitehead coal	" ton	0 18 0	1 2 0
Kilnsey	" "	0 18 0	1 0 0
Fuel	per stoke measure	0 2 0	0 2 0
Irish chamberlay	per yard	0 0 7	0 0 7
" flannel	" "	0 0 11	0 1 4
" fringe	" "	0 4 3	0 4 11
" towel	" "	0 1 8	0 1 11
" blankets	per	0 16 9	0 14 6
Corduroy	yard	0 1 3	0 1 5
General Average Weekly Cost per head—			
Provisions and necessaries		0 5 10	0 3 8
Clothing		0 0 7	0 0 7
Total		0 4 5	0 4 5

27th May 1883.

(Signed) J. George,
Clark of the Union

